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by BRETT HALLIDAY

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JANUARY-273

MIKE SHAYNE



MYSTERY MAGAZINE

NEW MIKE SHAYNE SHORT NOVEL

THE SPY WHO CAME HOME

by BRETT HALLIDAY

Though murder was the name of the game, it was doubly dangerous to the agent who worked both sides of the streets in Moscow and Washington. Shayne had hours to stop a push-button holocaust, and save his own life

2 to 42

NEW TRUE CRIME FEATURE

TOUGH TONY ACCARDO

DAVID MAZROFF 76

NEW EXCITING NOVELET

HORROR STORY

JERRY JACOBSON 50

NEW SHORT STORIES

TURNABOUT

AUBREY S. NEWMAN 43

SOME HOLDS BARRED

RANDALL GARRETT 102

THEFT OF A CRYSTAL CROWN

EDWARD D. HOCH 114

THE LAST PAYOFF

JIM DUKE 126

PETITION FOR JUSTICE

PAULINE C. SMITH 137

CAMPUS MURDER WITH TOMAHAWK

WALDO CARLTON WRIGHT 151

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MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE, Vol. 32, No. 2, January, 1973. Published monthly by Renown Publications, Inc., 8230 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif. 90048. Subscriptions, One Year (12 Issues) \$7.00; Two Years (24 Issues) \$14.00; single copies 75¢. Second-class postage paid at New York, N. Y. and at additional mailing offices. Places and characters in this magazine are wholly fictitious. © 1972, by Renown Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. Protection secured under the International and Pan-American copyright conventions. Printed in the U.S.A. Postmaster return 3579 to 8230 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif. 90048.

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GOOD MEN DIE, AND GOVERNMENTS COULD
TOTTER, BEFORE THIS BIG ESPIONAGE NOVEL ENDS

THE SPY WHO CAME HOME

by BRETT HALLIDAY

Murder was the name of the game and you made your own rules, as Mike Shayne, marked for certain extermination, followed the lethal clue which the C.I.A. had labeled, "Death to the Finder!"

BIERNY HAD a reputation. His place was clean, his beer was cold, and his pretzels were crisp. Bierny's was a good place to hang a hat on a drizzly Miami Monday evening.

Unless you had a drunk balancing precariously on the stool next to you.

Michael Shayne cocked an eyebrow at the neat Bierny

behind the bar and used a meaty shoulder to move the heavy back up on his stool. The heavy screwed his head around and eyed Shayne drunkenly. "You-all wanna play push, friend?"

Shayne had been warned when the guy had come into the bar. Instinct had told him to move, but he hadn't stirred.

Featuring

MIKE SHAYNE



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Now he wished he had clomped his hat on his red-haired skull and left. He wasn't in a mood to placate a drunk. He wanted to sit quietly, sip a couple of brandies, and he had thought that later in the evening he might phone Lucy Hamilton, his pert secretary, and go up to her place and listen to tapes.

"Hey!" The big man jolted the private detective with a palm. "I ast yuh somethun, friend: Yuh-all tryin' to push me 'round?"

Bierny sighed and stepped into it. He snaked the half-filled drink from the man and dumped the content in a hidden sink behind the bar.

"Thanks for coming in, pal," he said, "but you've had your quota for the night. Hit your sack, huh?"

The man ignored Bierny. He again banged Shayne with a palm. Then he straightened slightly and seemed to attempt to get the detective into focus.

"Hey," he wheezed, "Yuh-all are Mike Shayne, that big, tough private eye, ain'tcha?"

Shayne finished his brandy and left the stool. He tossed Bierny a wave. "Some other night."

"Mike, I'm sorry as hell."

Shayne shrugged. "It happens."

A sudden stiffarm jolt put him slightly off balance. He

took a couple of steps and squared on the drunk. He looked for a shoulder rig under the guy's coat, saw no foreign lumps.

"One more lick, buster," he growled, "And you find deep sleep."

"Yeah?" the drunk sneered.

The drunk looped a fist. It came from a mile away as he pitched from the stool. Shayne stepped inside the loop to slam a short jab into the man's midsection. The man's head came down, bounced off Shayne's shoulder. Shayne slid to his right and hooked a left under the man's rib cage. He moved back as the man gagged and stumbled. The man went down on his knees.

Suddenly hands captured Shayne. They came from behind him and they twisted his wrists up his spine. He went up on his tiptoes with an oath, but all he could do was dance.

The two uniformed cops hustled Shayne to the door where one took over, wrenching Shayne's right hand far up his back while the other cop went back to capture the drunk. Shayne protested: "What gives? Where did you guys come from? How come—"

"Shut up," snapped the cop. "You and your friend are goin' downtown. Drunk and disorderly."

"You're kidding!"

"Let's see if the desk sergeant thinks it's a joke, huh?"

The desk sergeant was a fleshy man with a salmon-colored face who was Mr. Efficiency. He booked Shayne and pointed toward the cell area. Shayne wrestled two cops all the way back to the cell. He was put inside the cage. The door clanked home. He grasped the bars and yelled at the cops until they were out of sight.

Then a quiet voice behind him said, "Take it easy."

He whirled. The man sat on the edge of the lower bunk of the cell. He looked forty, a thin man in a loose-fitting, cheap suit. Shayne immediately tagged him a 'Yankee Snowbird', a wino down from the north for the winter—until the man said: "It was a setup, Shayne. The drunk is one of my people. You and I are going to have a private chat. Sit."

Shayne sucked a deep breath. "Who the hell are you?"

"You can call me Bell."

II

MIKE SHAYNE used the fingers of his right hand to yank his left earlobe, then lit a cigarette, drawing the smoke hungrily. He was wary. "What's on your mind, Bell?"



The man produced credentials from an inner pocket of the cheap suit. Shayne grunted as he inventoried the plastic card. He asked, "You know a guy named Benjamin Hogan?" Bell's smile was tight. "*Bernard Hogan.*"

"He's with the FBI."

"No." Bell shook his head. "He's one of our people, CIA, one of our best people." Bell took time to light a cigar. "You worked with Bernie about a year ago, Shayne. You helped him get a man down to Cuba. You boys had a rough crossing that night. Heavy seas. Bernie suffered a fractured arm when he was hit by a wave on deck. You were forty-two minutes late in landing, but you got our man ashore on the deserted beach at 4:52 o'clock in the morning. His code name was Saint."

Shayne eyed the man on the bunk with fresh respect. He

knew the man's name was not Bell but he was satisfied the man was legitimate Washington. Bell waved the cigar to encompass the cell.

"It's private here. No prying eyes, no electronic bugs, no interruptions. You ready to listen?"

"Uncle pays two hundred a day plus expenses," said Shayne, "like anyone else."

Bell looked at his cigar. "That right? Seems to me that's a bit steep."

"So are my taxes, but I pay 'em."

Bell smoked. "There's a man named Albert Haynes who resides here in Miami. He's a computer expert, working for Interstate Computer Corporation. He also is a member of the Space Agency team. Haynes has developed a miniature computer that is vital to soft landings by space vehicles. We currently are using it in our manned flights to the moon. The Russians are after it."

"So? I thought the U.S. and Russia are exchanging space information."

"Not to that degree," Bell said. "The Russians have tried a couple of earth landings, but they've been hard knocks. The last one killed some cosmonauts. The U.S. is about to try an earth landing, using Haynes' computer. But the big

thing, Shayne, is the military potential. When the space people get these soft landings down pat it's going to be no trick sticking rockets aboard, missiles with N-warheads to be fired from a control center thousands of miles away. It shouldn't be difficult to envision that kind of threat—send a fleet of space ships to some strategic corner of the world, put 'em down, fire your missiles."

"Push button war, huh?" the redhead said.

"We're near, Shayne. Maybe too damned near."

Shayne drew hard on his cigarette. "Okay, let me guess. The Russians are after Haynes and you don't want him hauled out of the country."

"Not quite that crude," Bell said, shaking his head. "The Russians want the computer, not Haynes the man. They would like to have Haynes deliver a computer to them—I said it is small, miniature—but he can't, of course, because he doesn't have one. All he has is a set of plans. The Russians want that set. They have experts who can innovate from there."

"You say that as if Haynes has those plans in a shoe box in a closet somewhere."

"In a wall safe in his home, I understand," Bell said. "He's a widower, lives alone. He often

works on the plans in his home."

Shayne snorted. "If they're so damned valuable, how come—"

"There are three sets," Bell interrupted. He puffed on the cigar. "The Space people have one, of course. There's another at the plant where the computer is put together, and Haynes has the original set. Among other things, he's a perfectionist. He's continuously working on the computer, perfecting."

Shayne grunted. "So what's the pitch? I assume the Ruskies have approached Haynes. I assume that's why you're in this."

"Yes," Bell nodded. "The Russians are attempting to extort. They claim they can tag Haynes as a member of the U.S. Communist party. They claim they have Commie credentials with his signature on them, photos of him at Commie meetings, and they probably do have. But we're sure the signatures are forgeries and the photos are superimposed productions. On the other hand, public exposure, even if it is trumped up, could wipe out Haynes and cost the U.S. a valuable brain. Unfortunately, we've got just enough blind flag wavers in Congress to accept

what the Communists hand out about the man."

"How was Haynes contacted?"

"By phone. Last night."

"At his home?"

"Yes."

"And he immediately screams for help?"

"Loud and clear."

"So he gets help. You. Where do I fit?"

Bell remained silent for a few seconds before he said, "We hope to make a killing out of this, Shayne. We think a man we've been waiting months to trap is involved. The trouble is this man knows many of our people—but he doesn't know you. You might be able to hang him for us."

"Has he got a name?"

"Jack Perkins."

"Jack Perkins? That's pretty damned Americanese for a Ruskie spy, isn't it?"

"Perkins is as American as a hot dog," Bell said. "Reared in Vermont, an only child. Parents are respected, well-to-do New England people. His father is founder and president of a successful machinery and equipment company. Perkins is a graduate of MIT. After graduation, he went to Europe, supposedly as an agriculture expert, but in reality he is one of our people, CIA, living in Paris. He has many contacts in

East Germany and in Russia. These contacts feed him things we want and he relays. But we also know Perkins is working for the Russians, has been for more than a year now. He's a double agent. We've given him little stuff to feed to the Soviets.

"Legitimate stuff, but nothing vital. It's enough to keep him alive with them and to maintain his contacts. Meanwhile, he has been feeding us the same thing, nothing vital, but sometimes good stuff. It's enough to keep him on Uncle's payroll."

"Perkins must be a busy monkey."

"A few months ago one of our people in Moscow had a vital piece of information to get to us. Without Jack Perkins' knowledge, we selected him to be the receiver in Paris. It was a test, to confirm or wipe out suspicions we had about him. That information never got beyond him."

"Which also might mean your boy in Moscow flubbed."

Bell shook his head. "Nope. He passed the information to Perkins. He also passed it to one of our people in Oslo. We got it through the Oslo man."

"And Perkins is here in Miami now?"

"He's holed up in Miami Beach. He came in on a flight from Paris yesterday afternoon.

He recently asked for leave. He had it coming. Yesterday he checked in at a hotel here, The Atlantica, as a business executive from Canada who is taking a two-week vacation in the sun."

"Bell, if you people know Perkins is walking a two-way street, how come he's still operating?"

"Perkins' future was being debated when this Haynes thing popped up."

"You mean his quiet death?"

Bell lifted an eyebrow, stared hard at the redhead, then continued in a quiet tone: "Perkins and Haynes were chums at MIT fifteen years ago."

"Man, you're just full of surprises! Now tell me it was Perkins who called Haynes last night and Haynes recognized his voice."

Bell shook his head. "Haynes received two calls last night. The first was Jack Perkins, who set up a dinner engagement with Haynes for ten o'clock tonight. The second was from the extortionist. A different voice."

"What's that mean to you? The Ruskies have sent two boys to work on Haynes?" the big redhead asked.

"We're not positive, but we think so," Bell nodded. "Are



you familiar with the National Security Agency?"

"Vaguely," Shayne said.

"NSA's main business is code cracking, communications intelligence. They *listen* to the Russians. Okay, they informed us they *think* a man named Boris Poskov is involved in the Haynes project too. His exact role is unclear. Boris could be a leg man, a heavy, no more. He threatens Haynes, collects the plans, then delivers to Perkins. Boris doesn't have the flight immunity Perkins has. Perkins can fly anywhere in the world without Customs or anyone else looking at so much as his handkerchief if he flashes the right credentials. Thus he could sprawl here in the sun for two weeks, the plans snug in his

hotel room, and then make a legitimate return to Paris."

"Or?"

"The Russians could be testing Perkins. We discovered his double role; the Russians could be suspicious. Boris delivers to Perkins, who is not in any position to *not* deliver to Moscow, but *what* he delivers might be something else. Maybe Perkins, with his MIT background, has the savvy to alter Haynes' plans slightly, make the finished product inoperable. Later he always can say that Haynes turned over a dummy set of plans to Boris. Who's to dispute? But the kicker could be that Boris has put Haynes' plans on film before delivery to Perkins. This, of course, would give the Russians a check."

"Or," Shayne picked it up, "Boris could be a Judas goat and Perkins—if you'll pardon the expression—a red herring. There could be a third guy, you know. Maybe the Ruskies know you have Perkins spotted for what he is. Okay, they send him over here, knowing you'll concentrate on him. Boris gets the plans, hotfoots it to Perkins. So your boys get both of them when they swoop, the ploy being that somewhere between Boris picking up from Haynes and delivering to Perkins, he actually passes the plans to a third party, leaving

you people with a bag of air. study Haynes' reaction to the You got that one covered, call." too?"

"We will have," Bell said simply.

Shayne sucked a deep breath and shuffled. "All right, pal. Where and how do I get my feet wet?"

"Tonight at ten o'clock at the Speckled Plate in Miami Beach. It's a supper club. You have a table reservation."

"And how do I spot Perkins and Haynes?"

"Perkins is a squat man, five-eight, two-hundred pounds, thirty-eight, styled brown hair, and he has a habit similar to yours. You tug your left ear with your right hand. Perkins will tug his nose with his left hand. He'll do it often. Haynes is thirty-seven, six-three, one-hundred-sixty pounds, and Ne-groid.

Shayne grunted. "They dine and split. Where do I go?"

"That's going to depend," said Bell. "If they dine and part outside the Speckled Plate, tail Perkins. But Perkins might go to Haynes' home after dinner. Boris is scheduled to call Haynes again at midnight to tell him when, where and how to deliver the plans. So we think there's a chance that Perkins might go to the house with Haynes. He might want to

"Is Haynes aware of Perkins' double role?"

"He doesn't know. Perkins is a spy for anyone, including us. All he knows is, Perkins was a friend a long time ago at MIT, and that Perkins suddenly is in town, phones, and they make a dinner date. Then Haynes gets the second call, this one from the extortionist, who we're assuming to be Boris Poskov. It scares hell out of Haynes."

"And?"

Bell shrugged. "We told him to keep his dinner engagement, but to be home in time to take the midnight call. He doesn't know it, but we'll be on the phone line too."

"But my boy is Perkins, huh? I follow him no matter where he goes."

"You tail him if he and Haynes split after having dinner. We want to know where Perkins goes, who he meets, if anyone. But should Perkins accompany Haynes to his home, you position yourself out front and wait. Now get this, it's important. If Perkins leaves Haynes' house before midnight, stick with him. But if it's after midnight and Perkins still is inside the house, start watching for Haynes to appear in a window. Haynes is clued in on what to do if he gets his

midnight call and definite instructions.

"If Boris Poskov wants Haynes to deliver the plans tonight, Haynes is going to appear in one of the windows for you to see. If he stands with his arms crossed on his chest, that means he's been told to deliver immediately. In that case, you wait for Haynes to leave the house, even if Perkins departs. Let Perkins go, you ride with Haynes, tail him and don't lose him. When he makes his delivery to Boris, drop Haynes and pick up Boris. He should lead you back to Perkins. Let Boris make his delivery to Perkins, then stick with Perkins. We'll move in as fast as we can, but it might take a few minutes—and before you can ask, yes, we're going to have people nearby. But they're to remain out of sight. We don't want Perkins spotting someone he knows."

"And if Haynes doesn't appear in his window?"

"He'll appear. That's one of his habits. He often stands looking out windows. We know it, and there's no reason to think Perkins and his Russian friends don't know it. So he'll appear. He may even appear more than once. But you watch for the crossed arms. That's the signal.

"If you see him standing

there in any other position, and Perkins leaves the house, then you take Perkins and forget Haynes. It means Haynes didn't get the call for some reason or that the delivery is scheduled for some other time than tonight, or that Perkins has cast all pretense aside, demanded and got the plans from Haynes and is leaving the house with them. We'll pick it up from there. As soon as you and Perkins disappear I'll have a man inside the house and we'll know what's going on."

"What if this little game goes on for two or three days?" Shayne wanted to know.

"You'll have relief tomorrow morning," Bell replied. "I'm not sure just when. But I've got one of our people flying in, someone we're sure Perkins doesn't know. You'll be contacted and relieved sometime in the morning."

"Okay," said Shayne. "So now I go to dinner?"

Bell looked at a cheap wrist watch. "You've got plenty of time. It's only eight o'clock." He looked up. "Play all of this like you're walking on eggs, Mike. We want Perkins."

"Know what?" Shayne said sagely. "I've got a stinking suspicion that if I were to bet myself a hundred smacks that Mr. Haynes is at this moment engaged in altering some cal-

culations on a set of computer plans I wouldn't lose a dime."

Bell's smile was tight. "Maybe you should be a gambler instead of a shamus, Mike."

III

MOST TAIL jobs were a chore. Like getting up in the morning is for some people. Or going to bed at night is for other people.

Mike Shayne didn't like shadowing. It bored him. But picking up and trailing Jack Perkins and Albert Haynes reeked of intrigue and the detective had all of his wits tuned as he paid his tab at the Speckled Plate and walked out of the supper club behind the squat man and the Negro.

A parking lot attendant brought a shiny Continental to Haynes, who tipped the attendant and got behind the steering wheel. Perkins slid into the front seat beside Haynes and the Continental eased away quietly as Shayne passed two dollars to the Cuban boy and took the wheel of his convertible. He rolled out to the street. The Continental was a half block ahead now and picking up speed.

Shayne trailed Haynes and Perkins across Julia Tuttle Causeway, then along Biscayne and around the Orange Bowl.

They headed south on South Dixie Highway. The detective kept cars between himself and the Continental and was satisfied. He had one eye ahead, watching the Continental, and the other in the rear view mirror, attempting to pick up anyone who might be tailing him. Bell should have a man back there. The Russians could too.

Haynes finally turned into a side street in a quiet neighborhood and Shayne was forced to roll on past the intersection. They were out where the streets were empty and to turn would have been a sure tipoff to Jack Perkins.

Shayne rolled another block before cutting back. No headlights were behind him. He grunted and fed gas to the convertible. The drizzle had stopped but the night was heavy with humidity and he kept his windshield clear with the wipers. He made another right turn and rolled over to the street Haynes had taken. He turned left. No Continental taillights were in sight. It was okay. Haynes should have been off the street. His address was just a half block ahead.

Shayne pulled into the curbing and braked. He cut the lights and sat for a moment, allowing his eyes to adjust to the night light. Then he vacated

the car and moved along the dark sidewalk, shrugging the gun rig against his left rib cage into a more comfortable position.

The Haynes house had been constructed back from the street, perhaps forty yards from the sidewalk. A driveway went straight up the west property line to a two-stall garage that was a part of the house. Twenty yards across the front of the lot was the entry sidewalk that went to the front door. The yard was dotted with heavy shadows of what Shayne figured would be green things in sunshine.

He moved beyond the entry walk without breaking stride, keeping a sharp eye on the front yard. Light came from three windows of what probably was the Haynes' living room. The light did not extend far, but it provided a backdrop for the yard shadows. Shayne inventoried the shadows as he walked, looking for a foreign bulk, something that was not shaped right—or that moved.

It had occurred to him that Boris Poskova might be a wily fox. Boris could be stationed somewhere around the Haynes house, watching for Haynes' return from his dinner engagement, making sure the man was in the house before he made his midnight call. It would be a



simple matter for Boris to walk a few blocks down the shadowed street to a busy thoroughfare and use a public phone booth.

It also had occurred to Shayne that one or more of Bell's people should be in the vicinity.

Shayne stepped into the deep shadow of a fat shrub at the corner of the Haynes yard. He inched around to the house side of the shrub and sat squatted, inventorying everything minutely now. The houses on each side of the Haynes place were dark. That was good.

The neighborhood was quiet, seemed settled for the night. Far off in the distance somewhere, a dog barked. The bark alerted Shayne to a new potential danger. The possibility of Haynes having a dog on

the premise was discomforting. A widower living alone in a large house easily might have a dog. And some dogs, even enclosed in a house, were extremely sensitive to movement outside. Shayne wondered if Bell had checked for a dog.

Then Shayne saw Haynes appear in a front window. Haynes stood straight, seemingly staring out on the night. Suddenly he lifted his right arm. But all he did was tip a glass against his lips and turn and disappear.

Shayne took a deep breath. Everything seemed normal. Haynes and Perkins were having after-dinner drinks. He glanced at the luminous hands of his wrist watch. Eleven-forty-five. Too early for the Boris call, too early for a signal.

The detective thought about moving closer to the house, then sat on his haunches in the grass. He already had an excellent vantage. He could see the windows, the front door, the driveway. Dampness seeped into his trousers. He swore under his breath and put his feet under him again, remaining squatted. Then he heard voices. They were coming from his right, seemed to be out on the sidewalk. He inched back against the shrub and remained frozen.

Footsteps came to him. Two

pair. They clicked along slowly. A man said, "Ginny, I don't see why we can't just take off."

"Because I have a husband, Ralph. That's why we can't just take off. There are laws against—"

"But no one would ever find us. I promise, Ginny."

"I keep telling you, Ralph. You don't know Elmer. He'd search the world. Not to force me into returning, but to kill you."

"I'm not afraid of him, Ginny."

"Then why are we sneaking around as we are? Why don't we go to him, tell him we are in love, ask for the divorce."

"Well, hell, Ginny, that seems kind of crazy, when we can take off."

The voices and footsteps moved out of Shayne's range, and he eased. He was surprised to find sweat on his brow. He wiped the film away with a palm and surveyed the house and yard again. None of the shadows had changed position.

Haynes again appeared in a window, drank and disappeared. Shayne shifted his weight restlessly, kept his watch out where he could see the hands.

Agonizingly, the midnight hour passed. It became five minutes past twelve o'clock, then ten minutes past. He

wanted a cigarette. He thought about Will Gentry, his longtime friend and chief of the Miami police department. He wondered if Gentry was aware of what was transpiring in his city tonight. He thought about Tim Rourke, the veteran newspaperman. Rourke would give his left ear to be squatted here beside him. Shayne grunted and turned his thoughts to Lucy Hamilton. He could be at Lucy's place right this second, listening to tapes, if a drunk hadn't accosted him in Bierney's...

Haynes appeared in a window, arms folded across his chest.

Shayne jerked. Haynes had been instructed to deliver the computer plans this morning. The detective tugged his ear. Some action at last! But it was another twenty minutes before a cab stopped in front of the Haynes house and a squat figure appeared with Haynes in a doorway. The two men chatted briefly, and then Shayne watched Perkins come down the sidewalk to the cab. Perkins walked swiftly, his heel clicks strong in the quiet night. He got into the cab and the cab moved off in a clack of gears and valves that needed attention.

Shayne kept a sharp eye on the house. Five minutes passed before a garage door went up.

Moments later, the Continental was backed down the driveway. In the street, it turned away from Shayne. He ran on long strides to the convertible, leaped inside and shot away from the curbing in a U turn. The taillights of the Continental were almost out of sight. He saw them turn onto the busy thoroughfare.

Shayne caught up with and passed Haynes, then eased off on the gas, allowed Haynes to pass him and drift ahead. There was little traffic and Shayne could afford to hang far back as they cruised into the downtown area.

Haynes surprised Shayne. He braked at a curbing on a downtown street and left the Continental. Shayne braked ahead and watched Haynes stride past. Haynes paid no attention to him. He walked straight on solid strides, a man of purpose and destination. He carried a briefcase in his right hand.

Shayne left the convertible and went after Haynes. He didn't like leaving the car, but at this hour of the night shadowing from a slow moving vehicle was out. On the other hand, he felt as if he were walking onto very thin ground. Should Boris Poskov be waiting in a car at the curbing somewhere up ahead, and

should Haynes be forced to put the briefcase into that car, Boris would be gone and lost almost before a detective could get untracked.

Shayne saw only six pedestrians, and four were on the other side of the wide street. Up ahead was Haynes, and approaching the computer expert from the opposite direction was a young blonde girl. She had materialized out of nowhere and she was moving slowly, hips and bag purse swinging. Shayne sniffed. The girl had to be a hooker, out for the last buck of the night.

Haynes and the girl met. She curved slightly into him. And then Shayne saw her lift an arm suddenly and shoot something into Haynes' face. He yowled as the girl snaked the briefcase from his grasp.

Haynes went down to the sidewalk and squirmed as if in agony. Then suddenly he was sprawled and quiet and the girl was streaking away from him.

Shayne broke into a run. He figured he had the third Russian agent he had anticipated. Haynes looked dead as Shayne flashed past him. The girl went into an alley up ahead, streaking fast now.

Shayne curved into the alley and felt an ankle give under him. He sprawled hard and rolled, skin peeling from his

knee and palms. But he was up on his feet swiftly and moving fast down the alley.

He saw the girl go out of the opposite end. When he hit the street, the girl had crossed to the other side. She ran another half block, then turned into a stucco building that had a single light bulb burning over the entrance.

Shayne shot through the front door and found the building to be a fleabag hotel. A scrawny guy sat behind a warped desk, reading a pornographic paperback. He didn't bother to leave his chair until Shayne made a move to vault the counter. Then the scrawny guy stood and cowered, his face screwed up in fear.

Shayne reached out a long arm and caught shirt front in his fingers. He yanked the man to him. "The girl who just ran in here," he rasped. "What room?"

"Wh-at girl?" the clerk managed as he pawed at Shayne's wrists.

Shayne jerked the man up on the counter edge.

"Two-ten," the man gasped. "Her name's Lisa."

Shayne shoved the man back toward the tipped chair and leaped up the stairsteps. He knew he didn't have to worry about the man calling a warning; there was no PBX

behind the desk. But the girl could go out a back window, or she could have an accomplice in the room.

Shayne found 210, yanked out his .45, rapped the muzzle against the wood of the door and leaped aside. He expected a snap of bullets. But there was no sound. Not even a single shot. He leveled a foot on the doorknob and kicked viciously. The door flew open. He waited out of range for a few seconds and then went head first in a dive into the room, rolling and coming up on his feet with the .45 leveled.

But all he got was the young blonde girl gaping at him from the foot of a concaved single bed. She had the briefcase open and papers strewn.

"Fink!" she screamed.

Shayne captured her by looping an arm across her chest. She struggled savagely, kicking with her heels. He tapped the .45 muzzle against the top of her skull. The taps made her freeze. She was full of fire, but she suddenly became a statue.

Then she gasped. "Get your own, creep!"

She made new struggling motions. Shayne tapped again with the gun. She stiffened against him, stood rigid, her head thrown back against his shoulder, blue eyes round.

He shot a glance at the single

window in the far wall. It was closed tight. He surveyed the room. It was small, shabby and cheap. There was a portable, standup box for hanging clothes, behind him, the doors open. Three short skirts and two faded blouses dangled from hangars. A pair of shabby shoes was on the floor of the box.

The girl made another minor struggling effort, then repeated, "Go get your own, creep! Yuh gotta bust a girl?"

"The guy on the street," Shayne snarled. "Why?"

"Why what?" the girl screeched.

"You hit him!"

"Mace, man! No hit. Whado-yuh?"

"How come?"

"The briefcase! Whado-yuh think? Same as you! A john comes along at one o'clock in the morning, swinging a briefcase. Maybe there's goodies inside, maybe there ain't. What the hell, rollin' a dude is strictly for creeps like you? Ain'tcha never heard of women's lib, man? How about turnin' me loose, huh? I can't breath. You want them papers on the bed; take 'em. There ain't nothing there that makes sense to me."

Shayne freed the girl. All of a sudden, he relaxed. He watched the girl slide away from him. She went to the single window, sat with her hips

pressed against the sill. She wore a thin blouse, a faded blue skirt that was taut across good thighs. Her shoes were scuffed flats. Her survey of him now was a combination of wariness, curiosity and animosity. She sat braced with her blonde head cocked slightly and the blue eyes alert. She looked twenty-three, certainly no more.

Shayne holstered the .45 and gathered the scattered papers on the bed. He stuffed the papers inside the briefcase and zippered it shut.

"Hey," said the girl.

"Yeah?"

"I've got a hunch about you. You ain't no roller. You're fuzz, eh? Yuh gonna bust me?"

"You got a mother and father, Lisa?"

"Sure, I got a mother and father. Whatcha think? And how do yuh know my name is Lisa?"

"Go home to them."

"What for?"

"At least your closet will be in a solid wall."

"You say," she snorted.

IV

MIKE SHAYNE clomped down the wooden stairsteps, not caring how many sleepers he awakened. The scrawny desk clerk stood out of range but cocked as Shayne hit the

ground floor. The guy's eyes were round. He didn't blink. Shayne faked a motion at the man and the man leaped a foot. Shayne went on out of the building.

He stood in the damp night looking up and down the quiet street. The sidewalks looked deserted; but there were deep shadows along the walls of the buildings and the detective knew that scavengers could be lurking there, probably were. Human scavengers, waiting to pounce on an unwary victim.

A car whisked past him. He followed the taillights reflexively. The lights disappeared far down the street.

He hefted the briefcase, looked at it. He no longer was suspicious of the young blonde girl. He figured she had handed him a straight story. She'd been out looking for treasure wherever she could find it. A guy coming along a shadowed sidewalk, swinging a briefcase while lost in faraway thoughts was a ripe mark. A little mace in the face, a quick snatch, and a girl might have a fortune. Ninety-nine per cent of the time, however, like this night, she came up with nothing of value to her.

Shayne headed for his convertible. It was parked a block over and two blocks back along the street he had traveled

while he had been trailing the computer expert.

He walked out near the curbing, keeping a sharp eye on the building shadows. There were stirrings in some of those shadows, the shuffling of feet, indrawn air, but no one leaped out at the large redhead.

He cut across the street and turned into the alley down which he had chased the girl. Alleys could be unhealthy paths this time of a dark, moonless, Miami morning, but they also could produce action. They could afford anyone who might be trailing a detective an opportunity to make his move.

Shayne figured he could be approached by Bell or one of his troops, or Boris Poskov might land on him. There was the possibility that Boris may have been trailing Haynes from the beginning, too. Boris could have wanted to make sure that Haynes was going to the point of rendezvous and that the Negro was going alone, not with some foreign shadow sliding along behind him.

Shayne's scowl deepened and he shook his head. No good. Boris might be an expert at shadowing, but the detective couldn't be trailed from the Haynes house into the downtown area at that hour of the morning without picking up the fact that he had an extra



shadow, especially since the detective had been alert to the possibility.

But Haynes could have been near his rendezvous when he had been waylaid by the girl. Boris could have been tucked in an alley entrance somewhere nearby, viewed the snatch of the briefcase by the girl, the chase by a redhead. Boris could have taken up the chase. So where was Boris Poskov now? He should be moving in on a redhead who had the briefcase.

Shayne walked out of the alley unmolested. No one shouted at him or pursued. Where was everybody? Okay, maybe Boris had been left

hanging. Maybe he still was sitting in a parked car somewhere on a side street waiting for Haynes to come along the sidewalk and pitch the briefcase inside the car. But Bell's people should be around. Bell had said they would be. Bell would double cover everything possible.

Shayne moved along the sidewalk, keeping a sharp eye. This street was better lighted and there were no building shadows along the walk. There was traffic in the street, too, spread out, but cars were moving in each direction, some headlights extremely bright, others dim. Shayne expected one of those cars to wheel into the curbing beside him.

He walked on long strides. He felt as if he should be rid of the briefcase. It wasn't doing the CIA or the Russians or anyone else any good while a private eye had it.

He approached the spot where Haynes had been sprawled on the sidewalk. Haynes was gone. There were a few scraggly loiterers, night people. They shuffled around as if they once had been part of a crowd, but now there was nothing to see.

Shayne moved on, then cut his strides slightly as he neared his parked convertible. The top was up against the wet of the night and the top made the

interior of the car black. Someone could be lurking in that blackness. Shayne shifted the briefcase to his left hand, opening his right hand to swift movement to the shoulder holster. He angled across in front of the convertible and yanked open the door on the driver's side. The dashlight produced no foreign bulk.

The detective grunted and flipped the briefcase on the seat. He got behind the wheel and reflexively reached under the seat. The other gun still was in its special rig. He sat for a few seconds in debate, lit a cigarette. He had afforded plenty of opportunity for approach. There had been none, and he now had to accept the probability that something had gone haywire with Bell's people, that he had been alone in his shadowing of Haynes—or that, for some unknown reason, he was being given rope.

Shayne drove to his apartment hotel. No headlights came alive behind him to hang on him. He was scowling when he braked the convertible in the underground garage. He sat for a few seconds, drumming big-knuckled fingers against the steering wheel while he kept an eye in the rear-view mirror. He was waiting for headlights or a man on foot to come down the garage ramp. No one showed.

He got out of the convertible, locked it, took the elevator up to his floor. The corridor was empty. He got out a key and opened his apartment door to blackness. He flicked a wall switch and light flooded the front room. He grunted. The room was empty, looked normal. He'd almost expected someone to be seated in one of the deep chairs, maybe a CIA man—or maybe a Russian goon with a huge gun in his hand.

The redhead sailed his Panama toward the couch, hefted the briefcase. He felt as if he was holding a potentially dangerous bomb in his hand. He wasn't afraid of the bomb, but he didn't need it either. What to do with it? Who did he turn the bomb over to? He wasn't sure he would hand the briefcase to a stranger under any circumstances, even if the guy seemed to show proper CIA credentials. Maybe he'd just wait for Bell...

Shayne stared at the briefcase as he debated. Instinct was alive in him. He went into his bedroom and removed the mattress from the box springs of his bed. He removed the papers from the briefcase and spread them on the springs, then replaced the mattress and remade the bed. He pitched the briefcase into a closet, went to his kitchen, poured cognac into one glass and ran tap water over

ice cubes in another glass. He took the drink to his favorite chair and sat. The phone could ring any minute.

Three o'clock in the morning rolled around and the phone had not jangled. Shayne went to bed. Bell's absence rankled. If the Haynes papers were so damned important how come no one was making a pitch for them?

The detective was awakened by the snarling of his door buzzer, followed by a heavy fist beating on his door. He got into a robe and moved into the living room, where he snapped on a lamp. It was ten minutes before four o'clock. The pounding on his door continued. It had an urgent beat to it.

At the door, he growled, "Yeah?" without reaching for the knob.

"There's a fire in the building!" an excited voice on the other side of the door rasped. "Everybody out!"

Shayne yanked the door open. He didn't smell smoke or see fire. But he did see a large gun. It was held in the right hand of a beefy man who moved with the catlike grace of many large men. He popped his free hand against Shayne's chest before the detective could react and slid inside the apartment, moving out of range quickly after kicking shut the door.

Shayne puffed and the gun muzzle moved up higher on his chest. Shayne became rooted, expelled air slowly. "What kind of games we playing, buster?"

The man had small dark eyes and a small, puckered mouth. His cheeks were heavy and his skin was a natural deep brown color. He had large hands, big fingers. The nails looked cared for, as did the blue suit and the black shoes he wore. He wiggled the gun.

"I don't know who you are, mister," he said in a voice that had rough edges, "but you have a briefcase I want."

Shayne was alert to any trace of foreign accent in the voice. There was none. He decided to fish. "Pal, you've got the wrong door."

The man shifted the aim of the gun to a slightly lower position. Shayne figured that if the man triggered the gun a private eye might not die, but he'd have one helluva gaping hole in his gut.

The man said, "I saw you chase the girl, I saw you come out of her place with the briefcase, drive here. Hand it over and you can go back to bed."

"You've been waiting outside all of this time?" the detective said, stalling.

He wanted a step. One would do fine. From there he

could land on the man, twist the gun from his grasp.

But the man said, "Don't try anything!"

Shayne eyed him for a couple of seconds, decided the man was no rookie, then lifted his palms in a gesture of resignation. He went into his bedroom. The man was on him, didn't let him out of sight. Shayne got the briefcase from the floor of the closet. The man stood framed in the doorway. Shayne flipped the briefcase at him.

The man was deft. He caught the briefcase without moving the gun, flipped it back at the detective. "Open it. I want to see inside."

Shayne asked, "You got a name, pal?"

"Open it!"

Shayne opened the briefcase. The man's expression didn't change as he looked at the emptiness, but he said, "You better come up with what was inside that case."

Shayne took a step toward him. The man stiffened.

"It's in the front room," the detective said.

The man was cagey. He gave Shayne plenty of room in which to move to the couch. Shayne doubled over the couch, lifted a cushion with his right hand. He could see the man in the corner of his eye. He

whirled and flipped the cushion in one movement.

The man ducked and the cushion sailed over his head. He came up with the gun muzzle and nicked the edge of Shayne's jaw. Then he jammed a foot between Shayne's legs and sent the detective sprawling.

Shayne figured he was dead, except the man then made his first dumb play. He got down on one knee beside Shayne and rammed the muzzle of the gun against the redhead's ear.

Shayne lashed out with his right arm. The man peeled away from him. He went back across the room and stopped as the detective flipped up into a sitting position. The muzzle of the gun was aimed directly at Shayne's eyes.

Then the man turned and bolted from the apartment.

MIKE SHAYNE continued to sit in the sprawled position on the carpeting for a long time. He stared at the door. Finally he got up with a growl and flipped the cushion toward the couch. He went into the kitchen, poured cognac, found a cigarette, lighted it. He pondered. The invader had had him dead. Why hadn't he killed, found Haynes' plans and departed?



There had to be a logical reason for why he had not.

Shayne took the cognac to his chair, sat, scowled in thought. The guy had to be Boris Poskov. The guy could be anybody else, any clouter, but for the purpose of finding reason and direction the detective had to assume the guy was Boris. And he had to assume that somewhere between Haynes' house and the detective's bed, Boris had picked up the action.

Where and how didn't matter now. Nor did the fact that Boris had killed time before striking. The point was Boris knew Shayne had the Haynes plans, he had got the drop on the detective and then he had fled without the plans. Why?

The Russians had warned Boris: "No violence, no kill-

ing." Was that it? But if downstairs desk, at the loud violence, even killing, was a sound of a gunshot. means to an important end, That had to be it. Boris had why the soft glove? Espionage, moved in on the apartment stealing secrets from another under the assumption that he nation, preparing for missile would be dealing with an war wasn't a child's game.

Shayne shook his head, went over the action in minute detail, looking for something that would explain. Boris had ducked a cushion, then had tripped the detective, followed him down to the carpeting and slammed the muzzle of the gun against the detective's ear. He could have triggered the gun, killed the detective right at that point. But he hadn't. And it was why the redhead had taken heart, had had no qualms about swinging on his assailant from the prone position. Shayne had realized Boris was not going to kill him. It wasn't the way war games were played; not even cold war games, but then maybe Boris was a thinker.

Maybe Boris Poskov had reasoned that a large gun makes a loud noise, and a loud noise at four o'clock in the morning in an apartment building, especially a loud shout, would produce excited people, and the excited people would not leave time for a Russian agent to rip apart an apartment, looking for secret plans. Too, a loud gunshot could produce cops. Somebody would call the cops or the

average John Citizen, a guy who had just happened to be walking a sidewalk when he saw a girl down a man and steal, a guy who had chased the girl and retrieved the briefcase because the guy still believed in law and order and right and all that jazz.

Yes, that had to be it. Boris had moved in under a wrong assumption. He'd hit the door of the apartment waving the gun because he'd figured that the guy who opened up wasn't going to risk losing his life over a briefcase he had retrieved from a young, blonde thief. Boris had figured the mere sight of the gun would produce the briefcase. Then he discovered that he wasn't up against just an ordinary John Citizen. He had

discovered he was squaring off on a large redhead who didn't go pale at the sight of a gun or start quivering over the threat of violence.

Boris Poskov had had to shift mental gears. And he had still been shifting when he had the redhead wide open to certain death. But the meshing of the two had come swiftly. Boris had spotted danger, potential failure. Boris was a pro. He'd

figured killing at that moment might get him the papers he wanted, but a gunshot could hamper flight, freedom to deliver. So he'd backed off. He'd think things over, reconsider his line of attack. And he would attack again. Of that, Shayne was sure.

It was five o'clock. An orange-gray dawn was spreading across Miami. Shayne lay on his bed, smoking one cigarette after another and rumpling his coarse red hair. The night had not gone silk and cream for anyone. Not for a CIA man who called himself Bell; not for Jack Perkins, a spy in a double role; not for Boris Poskov, a heavy; not for a Miami private eye who still wasn't sure why he was in this thing. A little blonde girl had managed to become a very large kink in a rope designed to hang the double spy.

Shayne wondered about Jack Perkins. Had Perkins returned to his Atlantica Hotel room after leaving Haynes' house? And if he had, was he now in a sweat about the hitch in the pickup of the computer plans and Boris Poskov's failure to get those plans from a detective? Were he and Boris remapping strategy right this second?

Shayne put himself in Perkins' place. What would he do if he were Jack Perkins?

Send Boris tromping back to a redhead's hotel apartment, tell Boris to trigger a bomb if he had to—but get those plans? Or would he play it cool, allow his mind instead of emotion to rule?

Shayne had a strong hunch reasoning would be Jack Perkins' champion. A guy didn't remain alive in a double spy role on plunges.

Where the hell was Bell? Where had he and his people become lost? So there had been a hitch in their strategy. Weren't CIA people supposed to be skilled in coping, rolling with a punch, recovering?

Shayne attempted to think of himself as Bell. What would he do under the obvious circumstances?

One answer stiffened the detective. He sat up in the bed and snubbed out a half-smoked cigarette. Maybe Bell people had taken in the entire night. Maybe they had watched a detective shadow a computer expert toward a meet. Maybe they had witnessed the computer man being knocked down by a little blonde girl. Maybe they had trailed along as the detective had chased down the girl. Maybe they knew the detective had retrieved the Haynes' briefcase.

Shayne muttered an oath and left the bed. Earlier he had

theorized that Boris Poskov might be a Judas goat to the Russians. Now switch it. Make a certain redhead detective a Judas goat to the CIA. The redhead had in his possession valuable plans that were wanted by an enemy. The enemy knew the redhead had the plans, had made one attempt at getting those plans, failed. They would try again. No question about that. So the CIA could afford to wait. A trap still was baited—the only difference being, the bait now was a hulking Miami private detective instead of a computer expert!

Shayne cooled under shower water. Satisfaction settled on him. He wanted action. Being bait would get it.

He shaved and ate a large breakfast. He hadn't slept, but he felt alert and keyed, prepared physically and mentally for anything the day might bring.

He went into the bedroom and strapped on his gun rig. He took out the .45 and hefted it. It felt good in his hand. Holstering the weapon, he slid into his suit coat and jammed on his Panama. Then he lifted the mattress and bed clothing from the box springs and propped the mattress against a wall. He gathered the papers, shuffled them together, folded them lengthwise and stuffed

them into the inside pocket of his coat. He'd tackle the day as if it were a normal one, go to his office, check the mail Lucy Hamilton, his secretary, would have stacked on his desk, ponder prospective clients and wait for the next move from Jack Perkins and/or Boris Poskov.

Lucy was perky in pink when he entered the office and expertly sailed the Panama toward the old-fashioned coat stand in the corner. The Panama settled on a large black hook and Shayne's grin became huge.

Lucy fluffed brown hair, jiggling the curls slightly. "You have an early visitor, Michael. In the inner office. He was waiting outside the door when I arrived."

Shayne's grin disappeared. "Who is he?"

"He says his name is Perkins. Do you know him? I've never seen—"

"It's okay, Angel," Shayne said quickly. He moved toward the open door of the inner office. "No interruptions," he said over his shoulder, "not even a phone call."

"Yes, Michael."

Perkins was dressed modish. He wore a pale blue casual coat, white silk shirt open at the throat, deep blue slacks and white shoes. He sat in the chair

in front of the scarred desk. An ankle was cocked on a knee and he seemed quite relaxed as Shayne entered the office and closed the door. Perkins turned dark eyes on the detective. His half smile was affable.

"Mr. Shayne?"

"Yes?"

Shayne went behind the desk, sat. His coat was open, the .45 available. He inventoried Jack Perkins minutely from under pulled together, shaggy eyebrows. He didn't spot the outline of a shoulder holster.

Perkins sat forward and produced a plastic card similar to the car Bell had flashed.

"So?" said Shayne.

Perkins' smile disappeared. He looked down at the polished black shoe that rested on his knee. He fingered it almost idly.

"I recognize you, Mr. Shayne," he said. "I saw you last night. I dined with a man named Albert Haynes. You were in the same dining room. You sat alone at a table. No one joined you during the evening. You left the supper club immediately behind Mr. Haynes and myself. Seeing you now, I must assume that you were at the club to observe Mr. Haynes or me."

Perkins' stare was penetrating. He waited a moment and then nodded. "Yes, as I

thought, your motive was ulterior. And in view of Mr. Haynes later in the evening losing certain papers that are valuable to the United States government, I am now here to claim those papers in the name of that government. You have them. I saw you chase down a girl, take a briefcase from her. Later you went to a hotel where I understand you live. You had a visitor early this morning. I'm not quite sure where he fits into this picture, but I do know that he left your apartment without the Haynes' papers. Do you care to explain any or all of this?"

Shayne sat without moving a muscle. "Pal, I don't intend to explain a thing."

"I see." Perkins nodded, pulling at the tip of his nose with two fingers of his left hand. "Well, I suppose I should have expected as much." He continued to nod for a few seconds before looking directly at the detective. "And I don't suppose you intend to turn over Albert Haynes' papers either?"

"What papers?"

"We have you cold, Mr. Shayne," Perkins said flatly. "We know you have the papers. You could have them on your person, you could have left them in your apartment, you could have secreted them in your car, or you might have

dropped them on your secretary's desk a few moments ago. We'll find them—and you may already consider yourself under federal arrest."

"Pal—"

"The gun in your shoulder holster does not alter the fact. I, too, am armed. There is a gun on the underside of my right wrist. If you care to watch as you reach for the gun in your shoulder holster, you will see how swiftly I can drop my gun into my hand. Who are you working for, Mr. Shayne, the Russians, the Red Chinese?"

"The Purple Penguins."

Perkins seemed unmoved. "Well, perhaps you will tell us after we go across town and you are—"

"I'm not going anywhere, pal," Shayne said savagely.

Perkins stood. He looked at ease, but the redhead knew he was cocked. "Oh, but you are," Perkins said mildly. "We are going to the Federal Building."

Shayne stared up at Perkins. The spy was a surprise. He seemed to be playing a CIA role. Strictly. Briefly, Shayne felt off balance. Could Bell have been wrong about Perkins? Could Perkins, while in Paris, have been tipped about the move against his friend Haynes and now was taking preventive measures on his own? The only trouble was Bell had seemed so

positive about Perkins working for the Russians.

And where was Bell? For a guy who had seemed so bent on trapping a traitor, a guy who had seemed so hep on the moves of an enemy, he sure as hell seemed to have disappeared when he was needed.

"Shall we go, Mr. Shayne?" Perkins asked politely.

Shayne stood. He felt at a crossroad. He could go along with the Perkins' charade, see just how long Perkins was going to carry out the straight role, where it would lead—or he could stomp. He could land on Perkins here and now, in spite of the threat of the wrist gun, haul Perkins down to the federal boys, yell for Bell.

Except Perkins was not vulnerable. Perkins was as clean as a freshly scrubbed baby. The Haynes' papers were in a detective's pocket, not a spy's.

Shayne came out from behind his desk and growled, "If you figure you got to haul me in, let's get on with it."

In the outer office, Perkins asked, "Is there anything you want to pick up here, Mr. Shayne?"

"Not a damn thing," Shayne said, grabbing his hat and jamming it on his head as he moved to the door. He threw a look over his shoulder at Lucy Hamilton, who was sitting erect



and frowning. Shayne knew that Lucy sensed something was wrong, and he said, "Everything's under control, Angel."

They left the office, walking side by side. Perkins seemed relaxed, and he had made no attempt to disarm Shayne.

Outside, Perkins said, "I came by cab, so if we could use your convertible?"

Shayne said nothing as they got into the topdown convertible. He eased the car into the traffic flow and slid an oblique

glance at his passenger. Perkins sat as if they were going for a pleasant drive out along Biscayne Bay.

Shayne shook his head. Perkins was a good actor. Maybe he'd missed his profession. There was little doubt that Perkins knew everything that had transpired since going out to dinner with Albert Haynes the previous evening. It didn't have to mean that Perkins had been on the scene, of course. Boris could have reported to him.

Shayne had a fresh thought and it tightened his fingers against the steering wheel. What if Perkins was reacting to the discovery that someone other than himself and Boris was interested in the computer plans? If Perkins was such a hotshot at playing the double role, the discovery could have been a red flag, waved him off. He now could be CIA to the hilt. And Washington could have realized that its trap for Perkins had fallen apart, could have told Bell to get lost.

Maybe that was the reason Bell seemed no longer to exist. Washington could set up a new trap for Perkins later, in some other corner of the world. As long as Perkins came in with the computer plans, he couldn't be slapped in chains. But what would Washington do with a

detective, a man who had been caught redhanded with stolen plans for a computer in his coat pocket?

More than ever, Shayne felt as if he might be a Judas goat.

And then Perkins said, "I see you know your way to the Federal Building, Mr. Shayne."

"I know this town inside out, pal," he growled.

"But perhaps we need to make a stop at your hotel apartment," Perkins suggested.

"I don't think so."

"But there are the Haynes papers," Perkins said. "Or perhaps you are carrying them. Perhaps that is what makes your coat rather bulky at the chest."

"Maybe," Shayne agreed.

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Perkins drop the tiny gun from his wrist into his palm. Perkins put the gun muzzle against Shayne's knee. "You could be lame the rest of your life."

Shayne said nothing. He concentrated on driving, forcing down the surging temptation to slap away Perkins' gun wrist.

Perkins slid a hand inside Shayne's coat, took out the papers. Shayne allowed the move. And then he knew tremendous satisfaction as Perkins put the papers in his own coat pocket. Finally! Now he had Perkins where he wanted

him: with the evidence on him, taken at gunpoint. Perkins suddenly was vulnerable.

Shayne braked for a red traffic light at an intersection. Traffic was heavy. He was braked in the left lane of the double flow. But up ahead he saw a long open spot at a curbing. It looked like a truck loading zone. It was what he needed. He'd whip into the right lane, then into the zone. The quick moves should surprise Perkins, give the detective the instant he needed to slap away the tiny gun and jam Perkins against the door.

Perkins went over the side of the convertible like a cat and, continuing to move deftly, dashed across in front of the Ford station wagon braked to Shayne's right.

The detective yelled and yanked out the .45 as the startled Ford driver hit his accelerator reflexively, then jammed on the brakes again. The reaction had moved the station wagon forward, blocked Shayne's view of the fleeing Perkins.

Shayne rolled out of the convertible, taking keys with him and leaving the car as a lane block. Horns blared. The traffic light changed and the Ford station wagon shot forward, peeling rubber. Shayne almost ran into the side of the station

wagon. He did what had to look like a fancy dance along the side of the moving vehicle, and then he shot through the opening provided by the rolling Ford and a small Buick that power brakes had put on its nose.

Shayne raced into the sidewalk pedestrians, waving the gun. The pedestrians parted as if a giant honed knife had been brought down in their midst. A half block ahead Perkins was moving fast. Shayne's instinct was to bring the gun muzzle down on Perkins' legs.

Then a jarring weight carried the detective off the sidewalk and up against the side of a parked car. Two large hands were clamped on Shayne's gun wrist and a heaving body kept him pressed against the car. Shayne saw that his assailant was a beefy guy in laborer's clothing who had lost a hard hat. The hard hat was on its top, spinning on the sidewalk.

Shayne groaned as he attempted to subdue the beefy man. Citizens weren't supposed to get involved in somebody else's troubles anymore. Care for fellow man had gone out with brick streets. Except that occasionally there was a red-blooded dude who did care. Shayne knew he had one.

The beefy man suddenly got

help. It seemed to Shayne as if ten troops had landed. Eager hands pawed and clawed at him. A knee bruised his thigh. Oaths and excited yelps filled his ears. He was going down to the curbing. There was only one thing to do. He fired the gun.

The shot had gone straight up, but it was as if he might have turned a machine gun on the crowd. The aggressors peeled off with startled howls. All except the beefy guy. All the shot did was trigger him into a new furious flurry of action. Shayne didn't like breaking the man's spirit. He might never help another needy citizen as long as he lived. But the detective kneed the man hard.

The man groaned and doubled, freeing Shayne's wrist. Shayne slid to one side and shoved the man. The man stumbled along the sidewalk and sprawled on the curbing where he lay groaning and writhing and where he got a lesson from his neighbors. They really didn't care. They trampled the man in flight.

Shayne ran back to the convertible. Noise and confusion surrounded him. People shouted above excited chatter, car horns blared. And in the distance he heard the windup of a police siren.

He saw the foot patrolman

coming from across the intersection toward the convertible. The patrolman looked distressed and determined. Shayne holstered his gun and slowed to a walk, moving on long strides.

"Officer," he said before the patrolman could speak, "I was stopped here for a red light and a guy walked up to my car and shoved a gun in my face. He scared hell out of me. I thought he was going to rob me. But then he ran." Shayne turned and pointed down the sidewalk. "He ran that way. I chased him, tried to catch him, but he fired a shot at me. I—"

"Anybody down there hurt?" the patrolman interrupted, moving toward the sidewalk before having a second thought. He faced Shayne again; his face mirroring confusion now. He looked trapped between leaving and not leaving a red-haired motorist.

"No—no, I don't think so, but—"

"Move your car," the patrolman said. "Pull it out of that lane. Here, I'll hold traffic and you get your car around the corner. There's a spot at the curbing down there."

Shayne got into the convertible and moved it around the corner as the patrolman held traffic in the right lane. A police patrol car had rolled in from the opposite direction,

was braked on the far side of the street, red dome light whirling, and a uniformed cop was in the middle of the street, moving toward the sidewalk when he saw the convertible. He stopped and waved Shayne on past him with quick movements of his hand.

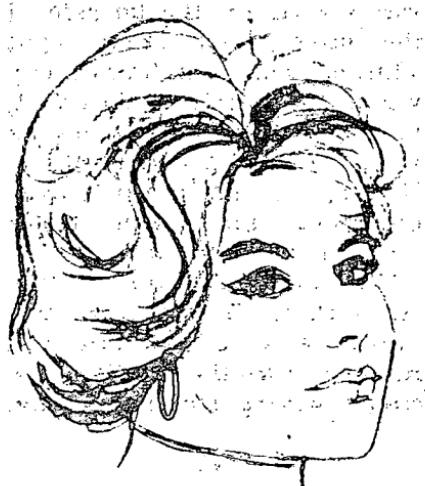
The detective fed gas to the convertible. In his rear view mirror he saw a foot patrolman running down the middle of the street, waving his arms wildly.

VI

MIKE SHAYNE rolled across the causeway and into Miami Beach. Cruising Collins Avenue, he continued to mutter oaths under his breath. He felt galled. He'd been duped by Boris Poskov, and he'd fed Jack Perkins too much line. Perkins had jumped the hook.

Perkins had been cat-quick. Would he be that quick about leaving town now that he had the computer plans? Probably. He had exposed himself.

Except—Perkins was a good man in the exposure game. He didn't follow the conventional pattern a guy might expect from a spy. He didn't scurry around in a turned down hat and a turned up coat collar, prowl only on foggy nights, and slink through heavy shadows. He came right out, identified



himself, made his play in bright sunshine on a busy street. You had to give it to Perkins. He was a wily fox, a sharp adversary, a professional. You had to blot convention and expected pattern from your mind when you were dealing with Jack Perkins.

Which meant Perkins might return to the Atlantica, the hotel where he supposedly was hanging his hat as a vacationing Canadian business executive. The return was not a logical move. But then Perkins was not a logical man.

Shayne turned the convertible in at the hotel. It was a tall, sparkling modern structure of white concrete and glass, a tourist trap. He found a parking slot and slid into it. From his

vantage he had a clear view of the beckoning main entrance. People, clothed in a myriad of color and style, moved in and out and around the entrance.

Mike Shayne sat drumming fingernails against the steering wheel for a few moments, then jammed his hat down and entered the hotel on long strides, ignoring the withering looks he caught from brushed tourists. The hotel lobby was dim, cool and magnificent in decor. The desk was about a half block away, on the beach side.

One of four polished men behind the desk politely checked for Perkins' key. It was not in its slot.

"I'm sorry, sir," said the man, clipping the words, "Mr. Perkins seems to be out of his room at the moment. Do you have an appointment?"

"Ring the room," Shayne demanded.

The polished man didn't hesitate. He was not inexperienced in being confronted by New York hoods. And certainly the large, angry red-haired man was a New York hood. There was a gang war going on in New York these days. Maybe it had spilled into Miami Beach. He put the phone together and said again, "I'm sorry, sir. Mr. Perkins does not answer."

Shayne headed back across the lobby. Perkins had not checked out. Did it mean anything?

Yes, it meant that jumping a hotel bill wouldn't even get a second thought from a man who had obtained papers that could move the world closer to push-button war.

It was a bright, clear day, the sun beating down. Shayne felt fresh sweat on his brow as he headed back toward his convertible. What was his next move? Were there any moves left? He could camp in his car, keep an eye on the hotel entrance, watch for Perkins. But he couldn't make himself believe that Perkins ever would return. Perkins had completed his mission.

Shayne got into the convertible. A girl opened the other door, folded into the passenger seat. She carried a bag purse, the strap hooked on her left shoulder. Shayne stared. The girl smiled. She was a brownette, long in face, body and leg. Her skin was tanned a rich brown. She wore a white top and bright red hot pants. Clean toes poked from red sandals.

"Drive, Mr. Shayne," she said. "Let's get away from the hotel." The girl seemed very much at ease.

"Doll," said Shayne, "I like fun and games, but—"

"Drive," the girl repeated, her tone firming. "And my name is not Doll. It's Barbette Johnson. Will you please get under way?"

"Why should I?"

The girl dug into the bag purse, produced a plastic card.

"Darn, not another one of those things," Shayne groaned.

"Less than an hour ago, Mr. Shayne, some papers were taken from you by a man named Jack Perkins and—"

"Not taken, honey. Perkins was allowed to remove the papers from my person."

"All right," the girl said simply. "How it happened is not important. The important thing is—"

"The important thing is," the redhead interrupted, "how the hell do you know Perkins has the papers?"

"Remember a Ford station wagon braked next to you at the intersection?"

Shayne remembered.

"Mr. Bell was in the back of that station wagon. Out of sight."

"So why didn't he make his move when he saw Perkins running?"

"You'll have to have Mr. Bell answer that. I can't. Now will you drive, please?"

"Where to?"

"Away from here. I don't care."

"Why can't we just sit here?"

"Because Mr. Bell prefers that Jack Perkins does not see you again."

"And he might if I hang around?"

"He might," the girl nodded.

"Which means he has not winged off to Paris."

"He has not."

"Are you people expecting him to show here?"

"We don't know! Please, Mr. Shayne, drive!"

"I think I prefer to sit here."

"Mr. Shayne!"

He smacked the steering wheel with a flat palm, twisted and stared hard at the girl.

"Look," he said, his voice hard and flat, "I'm getting a little tired of being a handball in this whole operation. I was bounced in, I've been bouncing since I've been in, and at the moment I think I'm on the verge of being bounced out."

"Mr. Bell says you are no longer needed," the girl nodded. "That's true. He prefers that you now go about your normal business."

"And if I don't?"

"Then I am to take you in tow."

"You!"

The girl almost smiled. "Not physically, of course. I am to ask you to come up to my room with me."

"So I'm out of sight in case Perkins shows."

"I have a room next door to Jack Perkins."

"And who is minding the store while we're sitting here?"

"Someone is in the lobby, watching."

"You're new at this, aren't you, kid?"

She looked mildly surprised.

"You answer too many questions," Shayne said, vacating the convertible.

The girl joined him on the sidewalk. She wore a slight frown on her pretty face as her eyes swept the area around them.

"Can we hurry?" she asked. "I know where the back door is."

"How about Bell? Do you know where he is?"

The girl clamped her lips. Then she said, "I just learned a lesson, remember?"

Shayne shot her a side glance as they walked. She met it. "Everyone has to have a first assignment, don't they, Mr. Shayne?"

Barbette Johnson was a rookie with the CIA but Shayne quickly discovered why someone had employed her. She had savvy. She pointed him to the rear of the hotel and then she piloted him through an employees' entrance and down a

long corridor to a service elevator.

They rode up to the eleventh floor, walked a corridor. A couple came around a corner ahead of them. Barbette slipped her hand into Shayne's and bumped her hip against him as they moved toward the couple. She turned her face up to him, gave him doll eyes. ". . . and will you be long, darling? I don't want to spend the entire day alone on the beach."

"I shouldn't be more than a couple of hours, baby," Shayne said as they passed the couple.

They rounded the corner and Barbette Johnson took her hand from his. They rode an elevator down to the eighth floor. No one else was aboard.

"Okay, cross your fingers," she said as the elevator stopped. "This is our floor. Perkins could be standing outside the door."

The doors slid open. No one was in the corridor. They moved along it swiftly and Barbette produced a room key from the bag purse.

The room was airy and conventionally furnished. Barbette went immediately to the phone and called the desk. "Page Mr. Charlton Brooks, please. He is in the lobby."

She stood tapping a toe impatiently against the carpeting as she waited for Charlton Brooks to come on

the line. Shayne sat in a chair behind her. He found his eyes drawn to the long legs and red hot pants. He admired both. And then she spoke into the phone again.

"I'm home with him," she said and hung up.

Facing Shayne, her smile was just a hair taut now. "Do you have any suggestions as to entertainment? This may be a long day. Or perhaps we sit and look at each other."

"Boredom," Mike Shayne grunted, "is one of the pitfalls of shadowing, Rookie."

She studied him for several seconds, and then she laughed suddenly and came away from the telephone. She took a cigarette from the bag purse, lit it with a lighter without offering either to the detective. She dropped the lighter in the purse and said, "I like you, Mr. Shayne."

She sat in a chair in the opposite corner and crossed her long legs. A smile remained, but she seemed to be studying him in a different light now.

"Doll," he said, "do you people really expect Perkins to show here again? He's got what he wants—or at least he's got what Bell said he wanted."

"I told you, Mr. Shayne, we don't know what Mr. Perkins is going to do. We're waiting."

"I assume he is under surveillance."

"Yes," she nodded.

"I assume he has been under surveillance all night."

"Do I have to repeat everything for you, Mr. Shayne?"

"All I'm trying to figure, doll, is how come I was yanked into this thing in the first place. In spite of that pitch of Bell's about wanting someone Perkins would not recognize—"

She interrupted, "I think Mr. Bell also told you that he would have some of us on the scene, too."

Shayne tugged his ear. "You know what, honey? I've got a hunch your Uncle Michael has been live bait in all of this. I've got a hunch Bell expected Perkins to get wise. I think Uncle Michael was fed to Perkins with the idea of forcing him into hurried departure. But I think, too, Perkins is a pretty shrewd gent. I think he suspected that the private detective setup might be a facade, that in reality I might be a CIA agent he didn't know. I think he played it cool at my office, giving me the arrest pitch. It was a test.

"If I was a brother agent I'd land on him, of course. I'd expose my hand but I'd have nothing on him, really. All he had to do was cry confusion.

He could maintain that he had become suspicious that his friend Hayes was in trouble, that he had decided to investigate for himself, that he had watched the action and now was making an arrest.

"But when I didn't pounce, he knew I was what I am, a private shamus who had something he wanted. He probably was puzzled about how I got involved, but that little mystery wasn't enough to make him back off. So he made his play for the Haynes papers and I let him do it to trap him—the hitch being he managed to bolt and leave me sucking air."

"You sound as if you're still damning yourself, Mr. Shayne."

"I'm human, doll; I boot a play once in a while, but it doesn't happen often."

"Well, perhaps all is not lost," Barbette Johnson said. "After running from you, Jack Perkins went to a car rental agency."

"So it's not too tough to figure how he's going to move out of town."

"Or perhaps return here."

"But why would he? He's got what he came for."

"I'm not here to fathom, Mr. Shayne," Barbette Johnson said. "I'm here to keep an eye on Mr. Perkins if he does return."

Shayne glanced at a wall.

Perkins' room was on the other side. "You got X-ray eyes, honey?"

"Electronic gadgets, Mr. Shayne," she said simply.

"Bugs?"

"They were put in last night while Mr. Perkins was out to dinner."

"You'll know when he enters or leaves the room."

"I'll know," she nodded.

"Or uses the telephone."

"I'll know," she repeated with a slight smile.

A buzzing sound came from somewhere in the room. Shayne scowled. The girl went swiftly to a wall closet, stood in the doorway, head cocked slightly. Shayne looked over her head, saw the bug receiver on the back wall of the closet. Rustling noises came from the receiver.

"Someone is in the room," Barbette Johnson said. "It could be a maid, of course. If whoever is over there leaves, there'll be a change in the tone when the door is opened from the inside. I'll go into the hall then, but you remain here, Mr. Shayne. Out of sight."

The redhead grunted, said nothing.

And then they heard a dialing sound.

"He's phoning," said Barbette Johnson. She inched deeper into the closet.

Shayne heard Jack Perkins'

voice as he conversed with a desk clerk downstairs. Perkins was checking out. He wanted his bill prepared. He also wanted an outside number dialed for him. It was a Miami exchange.

Shayne stood frowning as he listened to the new dialing. Then a male voice answered the ringing of the phone.

"Albert?" Jack Perkins said.

"Jack—"

Albert Haynes sounded mystified.

"Albert," said Jack Perkins, "I have something that belongs to you. You lost a briefcase last night. I have retrieved its content for you."

"But—but . . ." Haynes sounded totally confused.

"I think you know my work, Albert," Jack Perkins said. "I am not easily hoodwinked. Last night while we were dining—well, let's just say that I became suspicious that you were in some kind of trouble. I thought you might tell me when we went to your home, but you didn't, and then you received that phone call and—well, Albert, I was sure then. You were very nervous."

Perkins paused, but Haynes didn't pick up the conversation.

"Albert, do you know a man named Michael Shayne? Have you heard the name?"

"N-no."

"Well, he professes to be a Miami private detective, but I am not positive that he is. Oh, he may have an office here, and he may be established, but he also could be something else. At any rate, this Mr. Shayne eventually ended up with your papers and I retrieved them from him this morning.

"I'm not at all sure about this Shayne. He could be one of our people, someone I don't know, or he could be working for a foreign government. I'm leaving for Washington today and I'll find out when I get there. But on my way out of the city, I want to drop the papers off at your home. I'm driving, so it will be no inconvenience."

"All right, Jack."

"Maybe we can put two and two together when I get there," said Perkins.

VII

AT THE moment, two and two totaled sixteen for Mike Shayne. He shook his head in consternation as he turned from the closet door. His thoughts were clicking but he wasn't coming up with any clear logic to explain Jack Perkins' actions.

Barbette Johnson moved swiftly. "I have a car," she said. "I'm going to follow him. You remain here and out of sight."



"How the hell are you figuring him?"

"I'm not," she snapped. "I don't have time."

Shayne had time after Barbette Johnson had left the room. He smacked a fist against a palm, turned to a window and stood yanking at his ear lobe. His feet moved reflexively. He felt as if he was being left at a starting gate. Everyone else was flying down the track and here he stood in.

Why was Jack Perkins returning the computer plans to Albert Haynes?

Shayne stewed as he stared down on a plaza that was filled with green things, shiny automobile tops, moving people, some bodies browned by many suns, other bodies powder white, people in shorts, skirts, hats, sandals, hot pants, colorful shirts and blouses—and cameras, the ever-present camera dangling from the neck of the Northern invader.

It hit him suddenly and he bolted. He used the service steps of the hotel, leaping down them three at a time and bouncing on the landings to regain his balance. He shot along the ground floor corridor and out the rear door into hot sunshine. The convertible came alive with the flicking of the ignition switch. He rolled along Collins Avenue, cursing the traffic, and turned onto Venetian Causeway.

In Miami he headed south, finally hit South Dixie Highway. When he reached the street the Haynes house fronted, he slowed, his eyes alert. There was a polished Chev parked at the curbing in front of the Haynes place. He eased past the Chev. It was empty. Down the street was a Mustang. As he cruised past, Barbette Johnson waved her arms frantically, motioning him on to Siberia.

Instead, he made a U turn at

the next intersection and braked at the curbing. The Chev and the Mustang were facing him, but should Jack Perkins be driving the Chev and should he make a quick U turn after he left Haynes, he easily could be tailed.

Perkins came out of the Haynes' house, got into the Chev, pulled into the Haynes' driveway, backed out and zoomed off away from Shayne. Shayne sat without moving for several seconds, the Chev in sight. And again he was forced to give Barbette Johnson credit. The Mustang didn't move. A quick start and a turn to roll along behind the Chev would have been a sure tipoff to Perkins.

Shayne was rolling soon enough to catch Perkins' turn onto South Dixie Highway. He closed the gap between himself and the Chev slightly and then spotted the Mustang cruising in behind him. Perkins turned off on Le Jeune Road and Shayne picked up speed. Le Jeune could take Perkins to Miami International Airport, but that didn't figure, not when a man had just rented a car. Or did it? Was the rental another Perkins' byplay? He'd been full of surprising moves in the last few hours.

Shayne kept a block-and-a-half between himself and the

Chev as they flashed past Coral Way, S. W. 8th Street, Flagler beyond the East-West Expressway. The reflection of the Mustang remained in the detective's rear view mirror.

Perkins turned into the airport—and the Mustang whipped around Shayne. He yelled his surprise. He'd taken an eye from the mirror for a moment and Barbette Johnson had made her move.

Perkins braked the Chev and rolled from the seat. Barbette moved in on him, seemingly unnoticed. Shayne braked behind the Mustang and was outside when he saw the girl catch Perkins' arm. They struggled briefly on the walk and then Perkins bolted. Barbette shoved out a foot and Perkins tripped over it to sail headlong into the concrete.

But he was quick. He rolled and was coming up when Shayne heaved up to him. The detective saw the recognition in Perkins' eyes, and then Perkins leaped to his feet and shot a fist toward Shayne's jaw. Shayne ducked, rolled in a spin and captured Perkins with both arms. Perkins lashed out with his feet, attempting to find a target with his heels.

Shayne stood spread-legged, holding Perkins in the bear hug. Suddenly Barbette Johnson was before them. She stiffened two

fingers and shot them into Perkins' solar plexis. Shayne felt Perkins stiffen in his arms, and then he relaxed suddenly, gulping for air.

Shayne dropped him. Perkins groveled on the sidewalk as the crowd of curious began to close in. Shayne dropped a knee hard on Perkins' chest, pinning him. He found the tiny wrist contraption and gun, took both from Perkins. Then he went over Perkins' body with experienced hands. Perkins was clean of other weapons, but Shayne continued to search.

"What are you looking for?" Barbette Johnson gasped.

"Film. What else?" Shayne growled. "He had time to film the plans and then return the originals to Haynes."

The detective yanked off Perkins' shoes, examined the soles, attempted to turn the heels. Nothing. He went over Perkins' clothing again. Nothing.

Perkins wore a wide belt. Shayne unhooked it and whipped it from the man. He examined the inside of the belt carefully, found a slit. He pried the slit open and revealed the strip of film.

"Gold," he breathed.

Which was the precise moment when Bell arrived.

"Well," said Shayne, standing and tossing the belt to the

CIA man, "nice that you could make it."

"Will you believe," said Bell, "that I was behind you all the way—until I got tied up in a traffic accident at a red light?"

"When was that, after you left me in the jailhouse that night?" Shayne snapped sarcastically.

"We had to give him rope, Shayne," Bell said, his voice hardening. "We didn't have a damn thing to pin him with, even after he got the Haynes papers from you this morning. He could've gone straight to Haynes with the papers, or to the Federal Building here, or called Washington, or—"

"Bell," Shayne interrupted, "if you tell me that film isn't enough—"

Bell grinned suddenly. "You certainly got what we needed, Shayne. After he rented the car

this morning, he made a stop on a side street before returning to the Atlantica. We were on him, but we couldn't move in. And, I admit, the stop puzzled hell out of us. But the film clears the puzzle. He was photographing the papers."

"So only one little part of all of this is missing."

Bell's grin faded. He frowned.

"Boris Poskov. Or do you have him?"

"The morgue has him," Bell said flatly. "His body was found about an hour ago. He floated up on a beach. It seems he drowned."

"By whose hands?" Shayne asked with a wide grin, and almost smirked.

Bell grunted. "I don't know anything about it." He knelt beside Perkins. "Hello, Jack. This is the end of the road!"

Mike Shayne Headlines the February Issue With—

THE HARMLESS KILLER

A New Complete Short Novel

By BRETT HALLIDAY

Was he madman or the ruthless murderer men said he was? Mike Shayne had to find out the truth this bullet-studded night—or join the other dead men who had dared to probe the secret of this man of evil. The redhead at his best.

Turnabout

by AUBREY S.
NEWMAN

*They were lost, in deadly peril.
Life can be cheap, payment swift
and heavy, when you're selling a
deadly commodity called Fear...*

THE SMALL newspaper advertisement was only two lines of black type:

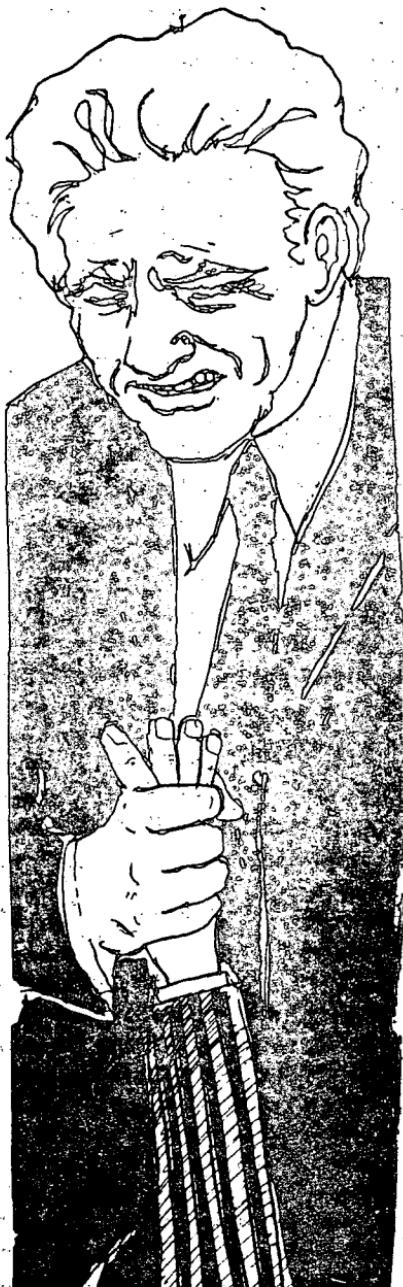
CRIMINALS ANONYMOUS
Call 388-1030

Of course that don't need much explanation. Everybody knows how Alcoholics Anonymous works—some used-to-be drunks tell you how they kicked the bottle, and all like that.

When I see that Criminals Anonymous notice I'm looking for job opportunities, after a two-year stretch in the pen. Two years makes you think what it would be like to do five or ten, or longer if you get real unlucky.

But it's not so good on the outside either, trying to get a job with a con record hanging around my neck.

That's why that Criminals



Anonymous idea seemed worth checking into. So I called the number, and a nice female voice tells me where and when they have the next meeting.

The place turns out to be a large room over a third rate bar, which made it easy to come and go without anybody noticing. It was clean, with rows of folding chairs facing a little raised platform.

While I'm waiting for the show to get on the road I gander around at other customers. They look like ex-cons, all right, kind of disgruntled and sullen.

Then I see Fingers Bronck in the row behind me, one seat to my left, and he don't fit the pattern.

I got to know Fingers pretty good in the pen, but he got out eight months ahead of me. He's a little pudgy looking, but don't let that fool you. He could smile while he breaks your fingers. In fact that's his muscle specialty. He started out as a pug but the pros belted him around, which gave him the idea he might do better against amateurs. So he hires out as enforcer for a protection racket—you know, where shop owners pay dues each week, so their windows don't get broken or something. Also as protection against bodily harm, which is where Fingers comes in, if

anybody gets real stubborn. And he likes the work.

Only trouble for Fingers is he gets so enthusiastic in his efforts to make people sorry they don't cooperate better, and pay up, that he gets pegged for mayhem. Just before he got out of the pen he says to me in the exercise yard: "Jimmy, I gotta find a new angle on the outside. That judge told me if I'm convicted again for busting people up he was gonna make my next hitch a long stretch."

"What are you going to do, Fingers?" I asks.

He kind of blows air through his nose, and swipes his left hand over his kisser like he's wiping his beak with a boxing glove, and says, "Well, that's what I gotta figger out."

I wonder what he's doing here now, especially since he don't fit the picture. Because Fingers looks pleased with himself, and is wearing some sharp rags.

When Fingers looks my way, his chubby face splits in the toothy grin he's got. He lifts his right hand, touching one finger to his thumb in the "A-OK" gesture he likes to use.

About then these three well-dressed gents come in. Two park in the front row, the other gets on the platform and sits in the chair at the table there.

He's a big fellow, about fifty

maybe, with a thick middle and a head of white hair. And he has that way about him like he's got it made.

When you look close, however, you see his nose was busted one time. Also there is a kind of dented-in scar on one cheek. I figures this was a tough cookie in his younger days. When he looked at us with his flat gray eyes, I knew he still was.

"Good evening, gentlemen," he begins. "Let me welcome those here for the first time. For newcomers, I'll summarize how we operate. Our name, Criminals Anonymous really explains it. Because we parallel Alcoholics Anonymous. All here are or have been criminals—which includes me.

"Let me say now we keep no records. For convenience we use simple code names. I am Boston. You can pick your own. The gentlemen who came in with me will talk at future meetings. That is Flanker on the right in the gray suit, and Nevada on the left.

"We never ask questions, just answer yours. When you leave a meeting we'll never see you again, unless you return, or ask our help to get a job and go straight. You can do that by remaining here to talk with us, or call the phone number you read in the newspaper advertise-

ment. A secretary in my office will answer, and she will set up a job interview for you, if you ask for one, with a placement agency that works with us."

This guy Boston paused and looked down at his hands on the table. We know he was going to talk about his past, so that's why his face seemed to get leaner and harder, thinking back. I got the idea, just watching him, it wouldn't be healthy to cross Boston even today.

"Now," he says, looking up from the table, "I'll tell you my story."

Then as Boston begins telling how he didn't start out to be a criminal, but gets a good job with a supermarket, this slip of folded paper is flipped into my lap from the left rear.

My name is penciled on it, "Jimmy Ahern." That Jimmy handle is because of my favorite way of getting into places when I don't have the key.

As Boston goes into how his interest in flashy blondes brings on a need for more cash, and he sees a way to get it from the large bundle of bucks in the supermarket safe over week ends, I open the note. Which is from Fingers Bronck.

Hiya, Jimmy, ole pen pal! he begins. *When this guy gets through yakking I got a business deal for you. There's*

plenty of dough, and no sweat—a real gravy train!

While trying to guess what Fingers deal can be, I'm only half hearing this Boston tell how instead of getting the cash he gets a good fat stretch behind bars.

When Boston stops talking he looked down at the table top a while, then raised his head and let those flat gray eyes rove from chair to chair; "counting the house" as actors say. There might be no record of names kept, but those hard eyes would remember us if Boston saw us again.

Then he tells how a little jewelry store burglary goes wrong, he got shot, fired back and winged the little old guy who happened to be there working late. So I'm listening to how Boston goes in hiding without medical help, like a hunted animal. As he raised one hand and ran a finger along that dented-in scar in his cheek, he said: "Only by the grace of God I escaped being a murderer, or getting killed myself. That's when the score added up for me and I decided to go straight."

Then he gets in some good licks about how you wouldn't make a bet at the racetrack on the odds a criminal faces, where you have to lose only once to wreck your life. Boston now leaned back in his chair, relaxed

and smiling as though the hard part was over.

"We want to help you get started straight in a job suitable to your abilities," he said. "But you must come to us. We can't come to you. This ends our meeting. Except for those who would like to talk to me, Flanker or Nevada here. Or call the phone number later."

As I stand up, deciding to chew the fat with this Boston, there is this touch on my arm. When I turn around here is Fingers Bronck, holding out the happy hand.

"Mitt me, Jimmy," he says, that grin splitting his round face as usual.

Fingers looks even more prosperous close up. He is in the heavy sugar for sure. More than he can get by busting guys' fingers as an enforcer, to persuade them cooperation is the best policy. So I wonder what the score is.

"Well, Fingers," I say kind of guarded like, "you look in good health. Especially with those glad rags you are wearing."

Fingers just smiles kind of satisfied. Then he says, "I've got the same idea they have here, to help ex-cons. Only my program is a little different."

"What is your angle, Fingers?"

"Now you're talking, Jim-



my," he says, taking my arm. "Let's go around the corner to a little bar I know."

It turns out he quit the enforcer business, like he said. Now he's got collectors, and enforcers working for him. In fact Fingers has got himself a nice little protection racket going and is in need of a new collector.

"Nothing to it, Jimmy," he says. "We've demonstrated enough muscle, so my cus-

tomers are a bunch of rabbits now. All you have to do is go around and pick up the dough."

Well, if you read the newspapers, you know what happened. No sooner do I begin work than the cops spring the trap they've been setting. That's how me and another collector get a quick ticket to the pen.

The only thing that happens to Fingers is he needs two more collectors.

When I've been on the inside looking out for a couple of months, I'm getting bitter about the deal. Here I was set to talk to Boston about what he's got to offer, and Fingers hijacks me into another hitch in the cooler.

That's why I am not happy on visitor's day when there is a Mr. Bronck to see me. When we are seated, looking through the screen at each other, I see right off there is a change in Fingers. He looks kind of beat down. Also he is wearing a cast over his right forearm and hand.

"Why the cast?" I asks him.

"Hell," he says disgusted like, "I had a accident." Then he adds, "How you doing?"

"Not so good, thanks to you," I snap back. "If you don't seduce me out of Criminals Anonymous I'd probably have a nice job and a good future."

With that Fingers really

swells up. That big smile don't split his fat face when he spits out in a low hissing whisper, "Criminals Anonymous, my eye! Wolves in sheep clothes, that's what they are!"

Fingers moves his cast to a more comfortable angle, then spills it.

"After you and Sam Goggins fell into that police trap I need two new collectors. So I go to another meeting of Criminals Anonymous to recruit experienced talent."

Here Fingers pauses a little, and looks like he ain't happy over what he is remembering. Then he heaves a sigh and goes on.

"This Boston is there, but another guy puts out the pitch. When the meeting breaks up, I head over to talk to a prospect and up comes Boston. He is smiling, and holds out his hand, saying, 'I'm glad to see you again.'

"Without giving it a thought I mitts him. When his right hand closes on mine he suddenly stops smiling, grabs my hand in both of his and the way he spreads my fingers and bends them back in a lock, I know he can break them if I move.

"So I stand still and say, 'Easy, Mister, or you'll break my fingers. You can go to jail for that.'

"Boston grins real nasty and says, 'You should know, Fingers.' Then he says, 'When Jimmy Ahern went to the pen and his picture got in the newspapers, I recognized him as having been at one of our meetings. This is the third time one of your collectors get nailed. From the news pictures I remembered seeing them here, and you talking to them. So you are using Criminals Anonymous as a private employment agency for your stinking racket.'"

Fingers eyes is bugging out and he is sweating when he says, "Then the SOB suddenly busts my fingers. Of course that knocks me down to my knees. He still holds my hand, and I'm about to faint but can't move.

"Listen, punk," he snarls, "that will help you remember never to come back again."

Fingers looks down at his cast and scowls. "Everybody there sees and hears what happens, and the word gets around my protection area. So the wise guys on the street keep askin' me, 'How are your fingers, Fingers?' Big joke, and everybody laughs. But that ain't the real problem."

Fingers sits looking at his cast a while and then says, "That Boston sends a runner around to me with a note. There ain't no signature, but

the runner says, 'Boston said you would know this was from him.'"

Fingers fishes in a pocket for the note, and holds it so I can read it through the screen:

The runner who delivers this message has already contacted all shop owners who pay you for "protection."

He told them that your protection racket is over. Also that if any collector shows up after today, to pay him, then call Criminals Anonymous (383-1030) and report it.

If anybody reports you making collections after you get this note, then what happened to your fingers is not a patch on what will happen to you.

Fingers just can't keep his eyes off that cast, and he adds, "Imagine that guy Boston, pretending he wants to help criminals, then putting me outa business by protecting the people from me that I was protecting. What a stupid hypocrite!"

"Why come here to tell me?" I asks.

"Well," he says, kind of sad like, "I wanted to talk to somebody that would understand. You just might be the guy."

"I understand," I say, and I'm grinning for the first time since landing in stir. "Muscle can cut two ways—and you are the rabbit now, Fingers."



Next Month's Feature Stories

THE HARMLESS KILLER by BRETT HALLIDAY

The New MIKE SHAYNE Short Novel

THIS MAN MUST DIE by JACK WEBB

A Brilliant New Exciting Short Novel

DANCE MACABRE by CLAYTON MATTHEWS

A Chilling Thriller

HORROR STORY

A NEW CHILLING SUSPENSE NOVELET



*Hate-packed, obscene, the voice came over
the phone. Listening, he felt cold terror
clutch him. For a good man can live only one
way. But he can die in a thousand ways*

by JERRY JACOBSON

THOUGH HE did not know it, Krieg Bannen's private horror story began at eight o'clock that morning. He rose early, had breakfast with his wife, Peggi, and toasted the first full-fledged day of Spring warmth and sunshine with his orange juice.

For a forty-three-year-old professor of moral philosophy whose key movements occurred mostly between his ears, he was even looking forward to testing out his legs by biking it into the college on the ten-speed English bicycle his wife had parked under a Christmas tree two years before.

Peggi had already left for her job at Wesco Insurance, in town, where she was a rater. In fact, except for Bannen, most of Cresthill Circle emptied out early, so that the community was almost deserted when

Bannen walked out to his car for the short drive to Shoreline Community College for his nine o'clock lecture class, his first scheduled assignment.

Had it been a gloomy, rainy day a little thing like an undelivered morning newspaper might have set him off on a brief tirade. But just as the hint that Spring was coming made young delivery boys absent-minded, it also made middle-aged philosophy professors tolerant and forgiving.

Monday was his Monster Day, as Bannen called it. Three lecture classes at nine, eleven and one o'clock, with a guidance session sandwiched in the middle. But after Monster Day, it was all downhill. He was in better spirits this Monday than most because on Sunday, he and Peggi had won the local neighborhood Paddle Tennis

Tournament on the backyard court of the Graysons.

And the Berruccis had invited them the upcoming Saturday for a boat trip through the San Juans. So what was a little thing like an undelivered newspaper?

The closest paper box was ten blocks out of Cresthill Circle, a block from the high school. He drove there in faded dungarees and an old college sweatshirt, passing throngs of students on their way to the high school and to Coan Middle School reaffirmed his sense of worth.

Once in a while it did his soul immeasurable good to witness the raw product, to know that these small, unformed things on two feet, seeming to motor eagerly, were indeed not being brought to him shackled, in barred vans, against their will.

In five minutes he was back home, parked the late model olive-green sedan on the street and went back inside the house for another cup of coffee and a few minutes with his *Record-American*.

When the telephone rang, Bannen was just wrapping up the college and pro basketball scores and his second cup of coffee. The abrupt intrusion caused him to start slightly. The last morning phone call he'd

received had been to inform him of the death of his father in Medford, Oregon; and the one before that, to transmit the tragic news of the suicide death of a close friend in college.

He lifted the receiver tentatively, like a demolition expert lifting rocks in search of unexploded bombs.

The answering voice was a woman's one he did not recognize. In it was coldness, impersonality. And a vague something else.

"Is this the Krieg Bannen residence?"

"Yes. This is Krieg Bannen speaking."

"Mr. Bannen, this is Detective Lieutenant Grace Speers. Are you the owner of a green, 1971 sedan, with the license number DFG 606?"

"Yes."

"Mr. Bannen, we have a complaint lodged against your car," said Lieutenant Speers, more coldly and distantly than before, Bannen thought.

"A complaint? What kind of complaint?"

"Mr. Bannen, I'm not allowed to discuss the nature of the complaint on the telephone. What I would like is for you to drop in and see me sometime this morning. The sooner the better, for everyone concerned."

For everyone concerned?

Then, there were others involved. But involved in what?

"This morning, you say."

"Room 712, County-Municipal Building."

"This morning? I really don't see any way, Lieutenant Speers. I have lecture classes to teach all morning at Shoreline Community College. I'm a professor of philosophy there. If you could perhaps give me some idea of the nature of this complaint, perhaps it can be cleared up without my having to make a personal appearance."

"I'm afraid that cannot be done, Professor Bannen. Can you arrange to come in sometime this afternoon?"

Something must have happened on the way to the paper box. Or earlier in the week. Some act involving his car. Was it some kind of collegiate prank being perpetrated against him. Spring weather had that kind of effect on young students. He had done nothing that he could recall. Absolutely nothing.

Now Lieutenant Speer's official voice came firmly across the line, mincing no words. "Professor Bannen, please don't force me to draw a warrant for your arrest. It can be done with a simple telephone call."

His arrest? That didn't sound at all good. What could he have done that was considered an

offense serious enough for an arbitrary arrest?

"Can you make it for eleven o'clock this morning, professor?"

"Eleven o'clock," said Bannen, numbly confused. "Yes, I'll be there."

Lieutenant Grace Speers put up the phone quickly, as though it contained a communicable disease. In the main, she liked her work in Juvenile, got satisfaction helping youths out of trouble and getting them back on the right track at home, in the schools, in society.

Five years a widow, before children of her own had filled her life, Grace Speers was compensating for that void by counselling and guiding the children of others. Female law officers still were not given the heavier, more physical field assignments; these were still rightly the province of the males. But here in Juvenile, happily and luckily, she'd found a real niche and a real need.

In her department only one kind of crime left her inadequate, nauseous and revolted: morals crimes. There was a depth of ugliness to these offenders which frightened her to her very marrow. She would rather sit across from a murderer at an interrogation table than a sex criminal, whose

insidious unfatal acts killed by degree, killed by the implantation of its evil seed early in a young girl's life or young boy's life. And then walked away from a crime that was still happening, an offense that would have its greatest impact upon its victim much later.

Lieutenant Speers knew of what she spoke through painful personal experience. Her niece, her sister's oldest daughter, was fourteen now. At nine, while returning with a small bundle of groceries from a neighborhood store, a man had driven up along side her in a "black car that looked like a big fish."

He rolled down the passenger window and summoned the girl to the car. He was a friend of her mother's, the man told the girl. She shouldn't become alarmed, but her mother had been taken to the hospital. If she would get in, the man would drive her there just as fast as he could.

Two hours later, Lieutenant Speers' niece was found dazed and wandering in a city park. She was stiff with muscular catatonia and could not speak. Her clothing was soiled and in tatters and the bluish bruises on her arms and shoulders were large and ugly.

It was six days before physical movement returned to her bruised body; and eight

days before she could once again speak. Police and psychiatrists questioned her diligently and with great care. They learned only that the man had a black moustache, wore a ruby ring and had a black car that looked like a fish. Nothing more, and nothing of the foul acts he had done.

Grace Speers had seen it happen many times, but only in the case of her niece had she been able to keep close watch on the development of a victim. At fourteen, she showed little interest in boys. After dark, she would not go out of the house alone, not even to visit a neighbor girl across the street. She was reluctant to discuss problems concerning sexuality with her mother and as she grew she acquired a certain aloofness where her father was concerned.

These were the real crimes being committed; these were the tangible acts of moral offense. And Grace Speers, as the girl's aunt, was helpless to do anything for her but pray that she would in time outgrow her fears and nightmares.

Lieutenant Speers took a call about a runaway girl, turning a pencil in her hands as she listened to the girl's mother explain the circumstances. She thanked the woman for calling immediately and assured her

they would do everything they could to locate her missing daughter.

Putting up the phone, she continued twirling the pencil. Runaways, kids on drugs, incorrigibles in the home and at schools, the mixed-up and the disturbed youths. These she could handle in stride. But the other. The other always let her speechless and shook.

Now, she found herself thinking again of Professor Krieg Bannen, of Shoreline Community College. Professor of Ethics and Morality. She set her lips and teeth in seething anger, pressing them together harder and harder. Until the pencil she held in her fingers snapped into two jagged pieces.

KRIEG BANNEN rode up in the elevator in silence. Along for the ride were two men in dark suits and two sullen youths, looking disenfranchised in grimy untucked shirts and hippy-hair tangled like dark snakes.

Bannen guessed they were under subtle arrest by the men in the suits. Next to them, he felt criminal and soiled.

Room 712 was narrow and gray-walled. The desks had been stripped of everything except essentials: typewriters, telephone and detectives. At a reception desk, Bannen gave his



name to a flaccid, red-necked man.

"I have an appointment with Lieutenant Speers."

"Grace, you got business!"

Lieutenant Grace Speers wore a dark blue suit and flowered neck scarf. Her blonde hair was styled slightly out of fashion, as brittle looking as the woman herself. Her total appearance told Bannen she was not there to impress men but to do her job.

"Professor Bannen, will you follow me, please?"

"If it isn't into a room with an electric chair."

"Just follow me, please."

The interrogation room was just large enough to accommodate the two of them: a raw oak desk, two metal chairs and a manila folder centered on the desk and closed.

Lieutenant Speers verified some basic data about Bannen and then cleared her throat. She looked frightened to death of him.

"Professor Bannen, can you tell me where you were this morning between eight o'clock and eight-fifteen?"

"I can tell you precisely where I was. At eight o'clock I was on my way to a paper box at Elmwood Avenue and 33rd Street, necessitated by the fact that our delivery boy, absent-mindedly struck with the beauty and promise of a new Spring, missed our house. I went to pick up a paper."

Yes, thought Bannen, that was it. Sometime during the morning, a crime had been committed somewhere in Cresthill Circle or nearabouts. They were narrowing down suspects and sifting rumor from fact.

Lieutenant Grace Speers could not look Bannen in the eye. Very possibly that was because she knew she would see in his deceitful face the unknown features of the man

who had molested her niece. Very possibly she would sense behind his eyes a twisted brain concocting evils even as it was being picked by her.

"Was that near Cresthill High School, Professor Bannen?"

"That's correct. The paper box is one block from the high school."

"And during that time, did you drive in Price Avenue?"

"For one block, yes."

"Between 32nd and 33rd Streets?"

"Yes. I used Price Avenue to swing back around to Elmwood for the drive back home."

"Professor, while you were driving on Price Avenue, did you pull your car to the curb and speak with a young school girl? A Cresthill freshman?"

"No, I did not speak to a young girl in Price Avenue. I got my newspaper and returned directly home. I stopped for no one and I spoke to no one."

"Professor, at roughly eight-thirty this morning, the mother of the girl in question called us. She said she had just received a phone call from her daughter at school. The girl was upset, in tears. She explained to her mother that while she was on her way to Cresthill High in Price Avenue, a man driving a green sedan pulled up along side of her and asked her if she would like a ride to school.

When the girl refused his overtures, the man then asked what time she finished her classes and if she would like to take a ride with him to Shell Shoal Beach."

Bannen's eyes were on Grace Speer's hands, holding the information stapled to the manila folder. They were shaking.

"When the girl refused his second offer, the driver continued to keep pace with her as she walked to the end of the block. His suggestive statements continued until the girl warned him that if he did not stop bothering her, she would call the police. At this point the encounter was broken off. The driver of the car sped away, around the corner of 34th Street and Elmwood Avenue at high speed. Obviously he thought the girl would not have the time or presence of mind to remember his car or its license plate number.

"But she did have both time and composure. In the fly leaf of one of her text books she scribbled what she had seen. And what she saw was an olive green sedan, with the license plate number DFG 606. The color, model and license number of your car," Professor Bannen."

The charge filed Bannen with anger. Obviously there was

a mistake being made here, or a cruel joke being played.

"Can you tell me the girl's name?"

Still the hard, feminine eyes would not meet his directly. "I'm afraid not," Professor Bannen. Since no formal charge is being made at this time, all the information I've received must remain confidential. The girl's mother has asked only that I talk with you about the matter. She does not want to know your name nor anything else about you."

Bannen rarely smoked. In fact he had given them up on the advice of his doctor six years earlier. But he needed one now. He motioned toward the half-filled pack near Lieutenant Speer's elbow and she nodded consent. Still she looked in the vicinity of her suspect. The vicinity.

Professor Bannen spent a moment before he answered the charge, hoping the words would carry greater weight after the silence:

"It's a complete lie."

"Mr. Bannen, I am not discounting the fact that the girl, in her anxiety and fear, may have exaggerated the incident."

"Exaggerated?" Bannen was aware that his official title had been dropped. He was now a Mister, stripped of a title he'd

labored long and hard to acquire. "Lieutenant Speers, I did not stop in Price Avenue. And I did not speak to the girl in question. I spoke to no one."

"Don't misunderstand me, Mr. Bannen. We have only the girl's word so far."

So far? Was she expecting witnesses to come forward at any moment?

"You said the girl made suggestive statements. What exactly was I alleged to have said?"

"Again, I'm sorry, Mr. Bannen. Since this is only a complaint, the girl's identity must remain confidential information."

"Yes, yes, you've already told me. So what now? Do I walk around with a sign on my chest reading 'Twisted Sex Criminal'? Will my neighbors understand that there is little chance of my perverting the neighborhood because I only do my dirty work near school grounds?"

"Mr. Bannen, I've been instructed only to discuss the matter with you. I'm quite sure the knowledge of this incident won't stray beyond these walls, or beyond the confidence of a mother and her daughter."

"Can you guarantee that, Lieutenant Speers?"

"I'm sorry, Mr. Bannen. When there is no charge, I can

only warn the individual of his behavior; guarantees aren't guaranteed."

Bannen closed his eyes. He was sliding fast. From professor, to mister, to "individual". Yes, he was sliding very fast.

The air was out of him now. A cruel, bogus file was thickening against him and there was nothing he could do to negate it.

"Is that all? Am I free to go now?"

"I have a few more questions, Mr. Bannen."

Bannen endured them. How long had he been employed at Shoreline Community College? Were he and his wife planning children? Had he ever been under the care of a psychiatrist? Had his wife? Why had he not been in the military? What was the name of his immediate superior at the college?

Could he give six character references?

"Well, I think that's all, Mr. Bannen," said Grace Speers coldly, when she had closed the file on him. "You are free to leave."

"What, no mug shots? No fingerprints to be filed under *Dirty old men*? Leave? When I leave here it will be back to a job and a community armed with every dirty little detail of this episode."

"I really don't think any-

thing of the sort will occur, Mr. Bannen."

"Can you *guarantee* that?"

Her silence told Bannen that the question was as patently unanswerable as the philosophical standoff in the timeless controversy of Chicken v. Egg.

"No stern lecture warning me to be out of Maidenhower Park by sunset? No admonishments about the dangers of going near schools where I might be tempted to commit sordid, career-ruining acts?"

"Officially, the current matter is closed," Lieutenant Speers said.

"Then since no charge is being lodged against me," Bannen said, "I now request that all the information you have gathered be destroyed."

"The basic details must remain a matter of record, Mr. Bannen."

"But shouldn't I have been advised that I could have remained silent? And that I enjoy the right to retain legal counsel?"

A soft smile fell from Grace Speers lips. She was too good a cop to make a legal error in this regard. "This was not an arrest, Mr. Bannen. Merely an inquiry concerning a complaint. I suggest you now go home, Mr. Bannen and put the entire matter completely out of your mind."

This was far, far too much. Bannen found himself on his elbows, glaring at her across the table. "Go home? And do what? Gird myself against the surge of rumor? Put my life back in order."

Grace Speers stayed silent.

"Hell, even you think I'm guilty! I can read it in your eyes."

"My job is not to decide guilt or innocence, Mr. Bannen."

Bannen was close to tears, could sense them on the rim of his eyes. Yet they would not come.

"Can I tell you one thing, Lieutenant Speers?"

The woman nodded.

"I have to live in these shoes of mine. Not you. Me. Tell me what compensation there is for that?"

"I don't know, Mr. Bannen."

"Well, I know, Lieutenant. The compensation will be damn little. Damn, precious little."

WHEN TWO days passed without repercussions, Krieg Bannen's fears began subsiding. There were no insinuating phone calls, no subtle cooling toward him by his students and fellow instructors at the community college, no unguarded, biting remarks overheard by Peggy on her shopping trips up to Cresthill Center. It was dying

down and Lieutenant Speers had been exactly right. Whatever the reason for the unknown girl's dark accusation, her family now wanted nothing else but to forget the incident had ever happened.

And then, insidiously, it began. On Thursday evening, Louise Holcombe called them with some distressing news. Their bi-monthly bridge game set for the next evening would have to be cancelled. Tina, their oldest daughter, had fallen down a treacherous set of basement stairs, fracturing her arm.

Bannen overhead his wife make the suggestion that they have their game the following Friday night. There was some discussion of the matter. Hanging up, Peggi told Krieg the Holcombs would think it over. Bannen himself thought it over and the conclusion he reached wasn't encouraging.

Why, he asked himself, should a bridge game be cancelled because of a broken arm when all eight arms of the participants were healthy? The Holcombs had other reasons for cancelling out, like two daughters in the same house with a sex maniac.

The cancellation by the Holcombs continued to plague Bannen all the next day until the second straw was lifted into the ill wind blown into his life.

It came in the form of conversation overhead by Bannen as he sat alone drinking coffee at a table in the college's Student Union cafeteria. Four male voices at a nearby table were in discussion.

"You can never tell about guys like that, man. Definite personality deterioration."

"A latent schizoid if I ever saw one. By day, ye olde mild, professorial-type, but when the sun sinks behind the hills—"

"...wolfman liveth!"

"Man like, I got a ten-year-old sister. Just knowing a creep like that is living around Cresthill...."

"They oughta put on a couple extra squad cars in Maidenbower Park. Guys like that just drool over parks."

"...and Shell Shoal Beach...if you catch my meaning."

Bannen got up from his seat and when he came to the table where the rumors were being exchanged he stopped. One of the foursome Bannen recognized. It was a freshman in his nine o'clock class in Moral Philosophy. The other three seemed not to know who Bannen was, but the fourth made deadly sure they did by saying, in an exaggerated way, "Good afternoon, Professor Bannen."

"Prosser."

Mark Prosser's mouth was

working rapidly, as if it were trying to hook on something pertinent to say. Finally, it did.

"That, er, was a fine lecture this morning, sir."

"You mean, I suspect, the comparison of the moral philosophies of Demosthenes and Cicero."

"Yes, sir. Really heavy stuff," said Mark Prosser.

"Well, I'm pleased you're getting into it. Because I'm toying with the idea of a quiz for Monday. I trust you'll favor Sullivan Library or Hale Dorm over the Brass Bear Tavern this weekend and be sufficiently ready to dig it."

"Dig it. You're really up on the lingo, sir."

"And you are correspondingly up on ours. Lingo is of my generation."

Only Prosser seemed amused by all this light humor, and even his was false, tense laughter. The others at the table were staring at Bannen with condemning eyes like three Cicero's pronouncing on him a sentence of death without vital due process of law.

Valiantly, Bannen made one last stab to break the icy stares bearing down on him. "And Prosser, not that I believe in giving students preferential treatment, a scoop in your case might help you bring up your grade point. Tuesday's theme



assignment will be a thousand word treatment on the repercussions of Cicero's penchant for condemning to death and exile Roman citizens, without benefit of legal representation or public trial."

One of the four saw what Bannen was obliquely driving at and lowered his head. But the denser Mark Prosser only grinned and stammered, "That's good of you to tell me about the theme before hand, sir. I'll get to work on it this weekend."

Professor Bannen smiled weakly. He was sure the topic of the theme had already slipped out of Prosser's feeble mental grip.

That evening after dinner, as

Bannen sat in the living room carefully preparing his hinted quiz, the phone rang. Peggi answered it.

"What? Who is this, please?"

Bannen stopped his work, listening.

"You have no right to say a thing like that! Stop it, stop it! Who is this?"

With awkward speed, his wife put up the phone. When Bannen asked her about the call, she averted her eyes.

"A—a girl," she told him.

"What girl? What did she want?"

"She said she was a friend of another girl. She...she..."

"Go on, Peg. She what?"

There was a deep sigh audible to Bannen across the room. "She said you made certain remarks to her girl-friend."

"Who said that? Did she give a name?" asked Bannen.

"No. She didn't even mention her own name. She said you asked the other girl to—to get into your car. She said you asked her girl friend to go with you to Shell Shoal Beach."

Krieg Bannen tried to be casual, though his insides were shaking themselves into pieces.

"Just some kid fooling around with the telephone," he said.

"But she knew your name, Krieg. And she mentioned the

license plate and make of your car."

"My name's in the phone book, Peggi. And my car's parked out front quite a bit. Probably a neighbor girl playing telephone roulette just to kill a dull Friday night."

"But if it was a neighbor girl, you'd think I'd have recognized her voice," Peggi said tensely.

"I wouldn't worry about it. The kid is probably high and dry without a date. Either that or she's been forced into a stint of baby sitting with Little Brother Melvin the Terrible, who every ten minutes bites an ankle and chucks the cat up on the roof. So the sitting sister decides to take out her frustrations on someone else. Believe me, Peg, the best thing to do is forget the whole thing."

"I suppose you're right, Krieg."

"I know I'm right."

If Bannen expected the one call would be the end to it, he was only wishing through his hat. Two more calls came that evening. The first was from the Graysons, informing them that the Paddleball Tournament for Sunday had been cancelled. And the second came from Frank Berrucci who, in a troubled nervous tone told Bannen weekend business had come up unexpectedly and that

their scheduled cruise through the San Juans would have to be postponed.

They passed the remainder of the evening in painful, suspicious silence. Peggi washed in the basement, cooked mysteriously in the kitchen and obviously avoided the living room.

And that evening, for the first time in his memory, she turned her back on him in bed. IT WAS the next afternoon and Peggi was just returning from her weekly Saturday session at the beauty parlor. "Krieg, what's happening?" she said.

Bannen was at the kitchen table, eating a salami and Swiss cheese sandwich and studying in a volume of philosophy translated from the third century Greek. "What do you mean what's happening, Peg?"

"Only something like the end of our social life," Peggi told him seriously. "This morning at Ardella's Beauty Shop, Grace Callahan treated me like an escapee from Plague Island. And Louise Holcombe told me that she and her husband couldn't make it for bridge next Friday night, either. And that's not all, Krieg. A little bit later, I saw Julie Holcombe coming out of Tassit's Drugs on the mall. I

mean, a fractured arm is something very difficult to hide, Krieg, and Julie Holcombe wasn't sporting so much as a bandage."

"Maybe it was the other Holcombe girl who had the fracture," Krieg said.

"No," Louise said, "it was Julie."

Bannen glanced up and tried to give her a reassuring smile. She was preferring to stand in the doorway leading into the dining room.

"Krieg, would all of this have anything to do with the phone call from that young girl?"

"All of what?"

"Krieg, are you blind? The cancelled invitations, the silences, the strange glances I get when I pass people on the street or see them at Cresthill Center."

"Just your imagination, Peg," Bannen said, but even as he spoke the words he knew there was no truth to them. The girl. She was systematically getting back at him for something. She was methodically and evilly hammering away at the foundation of his private and professional life. But why?

On Sunday there was more bad news. It was the day the Evershams, who lived in the big Georgian at the end of the cul-de-sac, chose each year for

their pool cleaning party. The Bannens were not invited.

Bannen dreaded what would await him on Monday at the college; but he had to face it. It was nearly what he had expected. His nine o'clock class was less than half full and he knew why. Quickly, without explanation, he issued a paper assignment and cancelled the remainder of the hour.

"So, under the circumstances, Krieg, I think it might be very prudent to fix you up with a leave of absence. Say a month."

Whittly, the head of the Philosophy Department, had always been somewhat of a maverick when it came to championing causes. But in Krieg's case, he was backing down to campus pressure.

"That looks a little like running, Calvin," Bannen told him. "And coming from a man who's on record as the type who likes to stand and fight things out, I'm a little disappointed."

"I'm a little disappointed myself," Krieg, but I'm afraid that in this case, fighting back against these rumor-mongering kids would only paint the picture blacker than it already is."

"So I'm on a leave of absence. And just who's going to buy that?"

"I'll get hold of Voss in the Journalism Department," Whittly told Bannen. "I'll have him run a brief item about a Philosophy Conference in Berkeley and that I'm sending you down to represent the department. Krieg, this is the best way, believe me. I've known incidents similar to yours happening at other universities. Before they're all over, they can get very ugly. And when they're over, careers of brilliant young men like yourself have been blown to bits by rumors which turned into fact long before any real facts turned up."

Whittly was letting him down as painlessly as he could, but it was the beginning of the end and Bannen knew it. When he returned, he would find himself transferred to some minor post in Administration when he would begin to rot away to dust, filing alumni letters and posting tuition payments.

"How did you learn about this?" Bannen wanted to know.

"Well, I could have picked it up at a dozen places on campus, but I didn't. I got a phone call from a young girl, a friend of the girl against whom you—"

"Okay, okay. Did she give a name? Did you recognize her voice?"

"Neither, I'm sorry to say."

"But who the hell got it?"

around the campus so quickly?"

Whittly made a gesture of total puzzlement. "Who knows? Maybe the girl has an older brother or boy friend going to school here at Shoreline. Or an older sister. That's very likely, one of the three. I've arranged for young Hodson to take over your classes for the rest of the day. He'll need a key to your office and copies of your syllabus for each course. Why don't you take care of that now. Oh, and your wife called."

"Peggi?"

"Yes," Whittly said, with some difficulty. "She received a couple of nasty little calls at her office this morning, and two more at home when she took the rest of the day off."

"I'd better call her, then."

Whittly's face twisted a little. "It won't do you any good, Krieg. She told me to tell you she's going to spend a few days at her parents' place in Coeur d'Alene."

"May I use your phone?"

"Go ahead, Krieg. But I don't think you'll catch her."

Whittly was right. After a dozen rings, Krieg Bannen put up the phone with slow remorse. Impending divorce, certain total censure by his community, demotion by his college. The vicious circle a young girl was mysteriously

drawing around him was nearly complete. And Lieutenant Speers would never reveal the complainant to him unless Bannen chose the rocky road of a law suit for character defamation and slander, something Bannen felt instinctively would do him more harm than good.

Slowly, his philosophical mind was summing things up and the conclusion he finally reached wasn't flattering. In his brain it became Bannen's Theorem: The more abstract the concerns of a college professor, the more incapable of handling life's real problems he is likely to be.

He headed along the footpath toward the low-slung wood-frame bungalow which served as offices and tutorial rooms for the Philosophy and English Departments. Perhaps a leave of absence was the best course to take; Bannen mused to himself as he walked. Perhaps when he returned, the entire matter would be cleared up or forgotten. But he wouldn't be moving on to Berkley, as Whittly had suggested. His tracks would instead be in the direction of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

Bannen was twenty yards from the pine-nestled bungalow when he spotted a student heading up on the footpath

from a narrow tributary. Bannen recognized him as Mark Prosser, his determined pace telling Bannen he was trying to catch up with him at the fork.

Prosser was by no stretch of the imagination a good student, but he was a cagey one. He bought themes and book outlines at the Campus Book-store and finagled written assignments from other students. And he wasn't at all above cornering an instructor to glean small clues about the contents of quizzes and exams.

"Professor Bannen, glad I caught up with you, sir."

Bannen smiled tightly. "As the football players say, you had a good and proper angle on me. What can I do for you, Prosser?"

"Well, it's about your eleven o'clock quiz today, sir. I know the quizzes are supposed to be a test of a student's preparedness and all that, but if you could just give me some idea of the general nature of—"

Bannen wasn't disappointed, nor angry. Many of his students tried to catch him in a corner and narrow him down. "Priming isn't exactly cricket, Prosser, you know that."

"Yes, sir, I know."

"But if you'll re-read Cicero's *First Philippic Against Mark Antony*, and his *Letter Twenty-Three to Antony*, writ-

ten following the death of Caesar, you'll recall—read and digest—your quiz grade might be helped."

"The First Philippic and Cicero's letter to Mark Anthony." Prosser hurriedly jotted the hints down in the fly leaf of one of his text books, going so fast he missed the crosses on his t's and the dots over his i's a good half-mile. It was Mark Prosser's single biggest flaw in his academic make-up. Lack of attention to detail and lack of thoroughness.

Bannen started up the short flights of wood steps to his office but was halted by Prosser's hand touching the sleeve of his jacket. Prosser wanted something else in the way of special help; and Bannen had a lot to do and a lot on his mind.

"Something else, Prosser? I've got a lot to do this morning."

"Yes sir, there is. I don't know if you're aware of it yet or not, but I need a passing grade in your course to get into State University this Fall. A 2.5 will get me in by the skin of my teeth. It'll be awfully close. Would you be interested to know, for instance, what my g.p.a. is now?"

"I'm only interested in the grade you receive for my course, Prosser."

"Well, it's at 2.6, sir," Prosser rambled on, hurriedly. "The grades in my other courses will keep me right around the C+-area and even a D-grade in your course might squeeze me into State."

Professor Bannen sighed as his mind's eye ran down the standings of his 26 students in Moral Philosophy 206. "But you're not even doing D-work, Prosser. How can I falsify your achievements? I'd be undermining my own moral values at the same time."

"Your—own moral values, sir?" Bannen didn't like the insinuation in Prosser's tone. "Aren't those a—a little tarnished these days, sir?"

So that was it, finally. Bannen was revulsed to clenching his fists. There were strong penalties for hitting a student, Bannen warned himself with difficulty.

"If you've got something on your mind, Prosser, spit it out."

"Don't jump to any conclusions, sir. I personally don't believe there's a word of truth to the rumors going around about you."

"So you don't believe in gossip. What else?"

"Just this, sir. I like you, as a good instructor and as a pretty straight head. I'd like to help you out."



"How can you do that, Prosser?"

"Well, I think I just might know the girl who's making all this trouble for you. She's a notorious liar and, well, a little unbalanced. If it's the one I think it is."

"And what makes you so sure you know who the girl is?"

"Talk gets around, sir. Somebody hears something and tells it to a friend and pretty soon, half the Western world is in on it. And I got a kid sister and she hears a lot of stuff, too."

Krieg Bannen looked at Mark Prosser with a steady gaze.

"Why don't you just tell me the girl's name?" he said evenly. "I'll take it from there."

"No deal, Professor. I mean, you'd probably tell the police and there'd be a big stink about it. A better way would be for her to just go down to the police herself and tell them she was exaggerating a little. She'd tell them she didn't want to get you into any trouble and to just drop the whole thing."

"I don't see where that would do much good," Bannen told Prosser. "Most of the damage is already done."

"That's just it, sir. We'll undo it. I mean, when people find out she was just doing it to get attention, they'll forget all about the incident ever happening."

Carefully, Bannen said, "And I imagine that since you're doing this favor for me, you'll want one done for you in return."

Suddenly, even before Prosser could speak his terms, the dawn was beginning to come up to Bannen. Like thunder. "Like see my way clear to give you a passing grade in my course. A nice, fat C, for instance."

"Now you're getting the picture, Professor. Actually, even a D-grade would be all right, because I could still pull down my 2.5. g.p.a."

Bannen's stomach tumbled with nausea. Mark Prosser, despicable and dense as he was, had Bannen over a barrel with

his backside showing. It was plain and simple blackmail. Somehow he had managed to crack through to the core of this whole grisly episode and now had no qualms about using the knowledge to his own advantage. He might not be directly involved, but he was playing it like a ruthless pro.

"I'll give it some thought, Prosser."

"You do that, sir. Remember, I'm in a position to get you out of a real bind here. But I wouldn't think on it too long. These scandals have a way of becoming fact if they aren't undone right away. Be seeing you, Professor."

In his cramped office, Bannen went through the motions of preparing for his forced sabbatical. He laid out a spare key and syllabus copies for Jeff Hodson, one of the department's associate professors. But his thoughts were on Mark Prosser and the more he thought about it, the more convinced he became that Prosser was behind the entire nightmare. It was specifically designed to gain him a passing grade in Bannen's course and get him into a chair at State University, squeezing out a more promising, better qualified student.

That still left Bannen to wrestle with the identity of the

girl who had turned his life into a pile of rubble. But there were two girls Bannen recalled now. The calls to his home and to Horace Whittly at the university had been from a "girl friend" of the young girl who had been ficticiously confronted that morning in Price Avenue. Who were they?

Obviously, they were girls acquainted with Mark Prosser. And then he remembered Prosser mentioning that he had a younger sister. And it seemed to him that Prosser also had a steady girl friend, one Bannen had seen in Prosser's company on many occasions. Randomly gathering books and papers to take with him to Coeur D'Alene, he tried desperately to affix a name to the almond-shaped face with wild blonde hair.

It was just a face, one which might take him weeks to run into on a campus the sprawling size of Shoreline C.C. Just a face without a name. If the face was a sophomore, as Mark Prosser was, then he had a copy of it in a drawer in his desk! In last year's yearbook!

Humorists had a theory about the futility of looking for things you need: What was it? They never turned up until you didn't need them? Fruitlessly he emptied the three drawers in his desk and then started in on

the bookcase when Jeff Hodson interrupted his frantic search, regarding him seriously, the way a psychiatrist might regard a patient going berserk.

"Listen, if you're planning to set the torch to these ancient facilities, I can come back later with the firemen and throw on some gasoline."

"I'm looking for a book," Bannen said not looking back.

"Lot of them on the floor there."

"Copy of last year's annual. You seen it?" Hodson often used the office to grade themes and finals.

"Next shelf down. Ten books in from the left. You got a crush on a frosh, or something?"

"Looking for a face," Bannen explained as he found where Hodson was pointing and began tearing through the pages. "A girl."

"I understand what Spring does to a man, Krieg. Your secret's safe with old Hodson."

If Hodson knew of his current difficulty, which was very likely, he was trying his best not to let it show. Bannen was grateful for it.

"Here it is," he said aloud. "Carmine Baggroli. Now, to find out where she is on campus!"

"I have to hand it to you, Krieg. When Spring comes, you

don't waste any valuable time."

Ignoring Hodson's barbs, Bannen quickly dialed the registrar's office, mindful that all nine o'clock classes would be breaking in ten minutes.

"Yes, this is Professor Bannen of the Philosophy Department," he said when a voice came on the line. "I'd like the Monday morning classes of Carmine Baggroli, sophomore pre-major. Yes, I'll wait."

"I know you didn't do it, Krieg," Hodson said suddenly. "Excuse me, but it's all over the campus like ivy. You didn't, did you?"

"No."

"Knew it all along. *Oderint dum metuant*, eh?"

"The only Latin I know is Cesar Romero," Bannen said, who in fact had a better command of it than Hodson, but didn't have the time to wrestle with the translation.

"Let them hate so long as they fear," Hodson said. "You got some hatred on your hands, Krieg?"

"No, I think it's just a simple matter of blackmail," Bannen said as he quickly took down the data now being spoken to him over the phone.

"Something to do with this business with the girl?"

"No time to explain now, Hodson. I've got to get over to Rammafard Hall. Key and your

syllabus copies are on the desk someplace. And straighten this room up, will you? It's a mess."

RAMMAFORD HALL, by footpath, was a five-minute run, but Krieg Bannen, by taking some shortcuts over hills and behind campus buildings, cut his traveling time to two minutes.

He still had time enough when he reached Rammafard, to make his way to the building's second floor, eliminating the chance of missing the almond-shaped face and blonde hair in the crush of students outside the building. He reached Room 212 just as a bell rang harshly and with his back arched against an opposite wall, Bannen waited for the face of Carmine Baggroli to appear. Which, seven faces later, it did.

As he pulled her to one side out of traffic, Bannen was aware of the hard faces recognizing him.

"Excuse me, Miss Baggroli, but I'd like to talk with you a minute. Do you mind?"

The pretty blonde sophomore blinked her eyes in confusion. "Professor Bannen, isn't it? No, I really haven't time. I've got an eleven-o'clock clear across campus."

Bannen looked at her evenly. "I've checked with the registrar's office, Carmine. Your

next class doesn't meet until one o'clock."

If he'd caught her in one lie, how many more could he expect?

"You're Mark Prosser's girl, aren't you?" Bannen said.

"His girl? I'm totally liberated, Professor Bannen. Mark just happens to be another name in my book. And you're detaining me against my will."

Krieg Bannen knew precisely what he was doing. But he had to go carefully.

"I'm doing nothing of the sort, Carmine. You're free to go anytime you wish. It's just that I've been asked by Professor Whittly of the philosophy department to contact you regarding Mark."

"Regarding Mark about what?" The pale blue eyes had darkened defensively when Bannen had first confronted them. But now they were softening to their natural color.

"About his work in my course, Moral Philosophy 206. As you may or may not know, Mark Prosser is in jeopardy of failing my course, an eventuality that would very likely negate any chances he has of transferring to State University this year."

Bannen was counting on one vital thing: that Mark Prosser, though he may have thoroughly discussed his blackmail plan

with Carmine Baggroli, hadn't yet had time to tell Carmine that the blackmail plan was set in motion. What he hoped she would read in his conversation was just a simple plea for Prosser's delicate status.

"All he needs is a C plus or D," Carmine Baggroli said. "And Mark says that won't be tough to swing."

"The fact of the matter is it will be tough to swing," Bannen told Carmine Baggroli. "And that is why Professor Whittly has asked me to talk to you. He would like a short conference session with you. He feels that as Mark's friend, you may possibly be able to shed some light on the reasons for his difficulties."

He could faintly sense in her expression now, a knowingness that Bannen had not yet been hit with Mark Prosser's trump card. She smiled easily.

"Well, Professor Bannen, I really don't think a conference session will be necessary. Mark has a way of finishing with a good kick. I have a hunch he'll pull himself out before Spring Finals."

"Then, if I read you right, Miss Baggroli, you'd rather not consent to a conference with Professor Whittly," Bannen said.

"You read me correctly, Professor Bannen."

"Well then, for the record, Professor Whittly must have a signed waiver to that effect, or a telephonic denial in the presence of a witness. Will you accompany me to his office for that, or would you rather call him?"

"Well, I'm meeting some kids in the Student Union in a few minutes," Carmine Baggroli said.

"There's a telephone in Professor Mallory's office in 201," Bannen said. "I'm sorry, but it has to be done. As I say, we're trying to give Mark every chance to pass this course."

So liberally naive was Bannen's wan expression, he expected Carmine Baggroli to break into instant laughter.

"Well, I have a hunch Mark won't need any preferential guidance, Professor. Sure, I'll call Professor Whittly."

In Room 201, Krieg Bannen managed to confiscate the telephone from the impending clutches of a student and put through his call. By ritual, Calvin Whittly never left his office before twelve-thirty. Bannen could only hope that Whittly, in the face of all the recent unusual happenings, hadn't suddenly decided to break from tradition. And he hoped, too, that Whittly would lock-on to the gist of his plan. Bannen's luck was holding

firm. He instantly recognized Whittly's tired, urbane voice as it came across the line.

"Professor Whittly, this is Krieg Bannen. I'm at Ramma-ford Hall and I've contacted Carmine Baggroli, as you've asked. She has declined the conference session regarding Mark Prosser. I have her here now, to inform you of her declination over the telephone. Can you speak with her? Good. I'll put her on."

Krieg Bannen smiled at Carmine Baggroli and handed her the receiver. Would she have the presence of mind to consider the consequences of what she was about to do? Bannen hoped not.

"Professor Whittly? Yes, this is Carmine Baggroli speaking. I'm told that I must make a formal refusal to a conference regarding Mark Prosser's status in Professor Bannen's Philosophy course. I don't feel a conference is necessary. I believe that is all you need, isn't it?"

There followed a short pause. Then, Carmine Baggroli was presenting the receiver to Bannen. "He wants to talk to you."

Whittly's first words were not the ones Bannen wanted to hear. "What the devil is this all about, Bannen? There is no conference set up with this girl!"

"And what is all this business about Mark Prosser?"

From the corner of his eye, Bannen got the Baggroli girl moving back a few steps. He placed the receiver tightly against his lips and said: "The voice, . . . Calvin! Do . . . you . . . recognize . . . the . . . voice!"

Bannen held his breath. He could feel the perforations, each small hole, against his ear. He waited for the response that could save his life and his career, his pride, his marriage . . . everything. He waited desperately.

And then Calvin Whittly's voice was exploding across the line. "That's her, Krieg! That's the girl who called me on the phone this morning!"

"You're sure?" Bannen said.

"Yes, I'm sure. Just don't let that girl get out of your hands, or you'll never make your way to the source of this thing!"

It was a prophetic statement because, out of the edge of his eye, Bannen now caught the Baggroli girl breaking into a sprint down the hallway.

Bannen left the phone hanging and broke out after her. The mass of wild blonde hair descended in a disappearing act down the U-shaped staircase leading to the first floor of Rammaford Hall. Shorter legs and heeled shoes were not the best apparatus for escape.

Bannen caught her at the apex of the U, spun Carmine Baggroli around and pinned her against an unyielding wall. He was in no mood to pussyfoot. His thumbs dug into the slender shoulders.

"It was you who made that phone call to my wife, wasn't it, Carmine! And the call to Professor Whittly this morning! Wasn't it! Wasn't it!"

Trapped into a monumental error, Carmine Baggroli was trembling now like a caged animal.

"Please. You're hurting my shoulders."

"Hurt? You don't know the meaning of the word. Do you know what it's like to lose your self-respect in your community? In your profession? In your marriage? Give me the name of the girl who slandered me and the names of the people behind all this. If you don't, so help me I'll break your collar bones right here and walk away from you without a backward glance!"

Bannen was going all the way with her now. He was on the raw edge of losing everything and there was really nothing else left to lose.

"Tell me! Or heaven help me—" "It was Mark's idea, Professor Bannen," came the words now, rushing out like water

from a tap opened wide. "He said it couldn't fail and no one would get hurt."

"Hurt," said Bannen. "Would it interest you at all, Miss Baggroli, to know that my wife has left me over this?"

"Your wife?"

"Did you expect this would effect only me? Did you think it would wrap itself up into a nice, neat package, with four tight walls - and a pretty ribbon?" Bannen released the pressure on the girl's shoulders slightly. "What was it for? So Mark Prosser could get a passing grade in my course? Was that it?"

The almond-shaped head nodded. The blonde hair shuddered like gold mist. The pale blue eyes cried.

"It was Mark's sister," said the small voice. "Mindy. She doesn't even know you. God, I told Mark it wouldn't work. I told him!"

The end in sight, the dark tunnel of this nightmare showing light, Bannen kept at her relentlessly.

"The girl, Mark's sister, said she wrote down my automobile's make and license number in a textbook."

"Mark wrote it down for her," said the shaken voice. That could be easily verified. Krieg Bannen knew Mark Prosser's slapdash handwriting,

his helpless habit of uncrossed t's and undotted i's.

"People don't do things against their will unless they are threatened. How was Mark Prosser threatening Mindy, Carmine? What was he using against her as a weapon?"

"Drugs," came Carmine Baggroli's thin voice as big tears began to fall unabated. "She's a barb-freak, a fourteen-year-old Barbie Doll. She was into the works, Professor Bannen. Red birds, yellow jackets, blue heavens, goofers. If it's in a cap, Mindy will pop it."

"And her parents had no idea she was on her way to Speed and Acid and the whole trip."

"If they ever found out, it would rip a hole in their whole straight bag big enough to drive a truck through. I mean, they're nose-to-the-old-grindstone types and Mark's dada has a heart condition. Like, Mindy is out of her mind ninety percent of the time, but she isn't so tripped out she doesn't know what it would do to her dad if he found out she lived out of a capsule."

The pale blue eyes had finished their crying. Bannen introduced a handkerchief and then led Carmine Baggroli down the final flight of stairs to Rammafard's first floor.

"We're going downtown to see a police detective, Carmine.

And you're going to repeat to her precisely what you've said to me."

"Her? I thought detectives were all men?"

"Women's Lib's made fantastic inroads everywhere, Carmine."

It was not until they hit the unpopulated freeway that Krieg Bannen felt his life coming back together again. There were so many things to do, so many wrongs to be right. He sighed. Detective Lieutenant Grace Speers was first. He would go at it one step at a time.

Relaxed, Bannen reached for

a cigarette in his shirt pocket and discovered a spreading blue stain from a ballpoint pen which had suddenly choosen to leak. And because he was a man devoted to precepts and symbols, and not precisely of this world until lately, Krieg Bannen read the stain in a symbolic way. The thing about stains, he decided, was that they were difficult to eradicate and very long in vanishing. But they did vanish, they did go away.

And Krieg Bannen, now of this world and a victor in its wars, saw tremendous hope and redemption in that.



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TOUGH TONY ACCARDO

MR. BIG OF CHICAGO

by DAVID MAZROFF



WHEN THE COPS found wily Frank "The Enforcer" Nitti on that cold autumn night he was dead.

His bare head was against a heavy wire fence, the eyes closed. His body, stretched straight out, toes turned up, lay on an irregular bed of weeds near a railroad siding. He was dressed in an expensive gray suit and a darker gray topcoat. A gray, wide-brimmed hat with

a black band lay at the left of the dead man.

Police spotlights were turned on the scene and the prone figure on the ground was silhouetted grotesquely in black and gray shadows.

An inspector and a lieutenant of the homicide division knelt on either side of Nitti's body while behind them a swelling hum of noises broke the silence of the night as some

A NEVER BEFORE TOLD STORY
of Chicago's Crime Brotherhood



half-dozen uniformed cops talked among themselves.

The inspector found the .38 caliber white metal, detective special, picked it up by the barrel and dropped it into a cellophane evidence bag. The inspector said, "One neat hole in the right temple. You think it was suicide?"

"No," the lieutenant answered. "Too pat. Why the hell should Nitti choose a spot like this, way out to hell and gone, to do the kill himself? Why not in his home? Another thing, how the hell did he get here? No buses. No street cars. And no sign of his car. Would he walk this far to kill himself? I can't buy it."

"Neither can I. If we mark it murder, a gangland killing, it will mean putting some good men on the case for weeks. They won't be able to learn a thing. Let's call it suicide and forget about it."

"Nitti was the number one man, Joe. If we're right, then Nitti was killed or ordered killed by the number two man for a takeover. You know who the number two man is?"

"Yep. Tony Accardo." He made a noise in his throat. "Getting that baby to talk would be like trying to swallow Lake Michigan. He doesn't even talk to God."

"Okay, here's the meat. Fine."

wagon and the I.D. men. It's their job now. Let's get outta here."

In a suite in the Lexington Hotel on Michigan Boulevard and 22nd Street on Chicago's South Side, Anthony Joseph Accardo sat behind a polished mahagony desk and grinned at the four men in the room who sat in deep armchairs in front of him.

"Frank shouldn't have knocked himself off like that," he said. His grin broadened. "We could've done it for him, as a favor, in the bedroom of his home where he woulda been nice and comfortable."

The four men grinned back silently. They waited for Accardo to say more, to say what really was on his mind. Despite the grin on his face they knew him as few other men knew him. He personified death, harsh, violent, and bloody.

Accardo said, "I have to order a wreath for Frank. Let's see, roses and carnations. Yeah, that should be nice." He picked up the phone and called a florist, ordered the wreath.

"I want a nice blue ribbon across the wreath with the words 'From your pal, Joe Batters.' You got that? Yeah? Send the bill to Mr. Anthony Accardo, Lexington Hotel."

Accardo attended Nitti's funeral, embraced Mrs. Nitti tenderly, and wept for the departed. He could at a moment's notice, if the occasion demanded it, surrender all the harshness in his makeup, all the violence and calculation, to emotion. There was the time when he attended a soap opera movie with a henchman. The heroine died at a tender age, à la Jenny in "Love Story," and Accardo wept. The henchman, who had a sense of humor but little feeling for fictional drama, turned to Accardo.

"Tony, stop crying," he whispered. "You're flooding the aisles."

Accardo snapped back, "The trouble with you is that you got no heart."

Along with his sentimental responses to occasional incidents of social and human tragedies he possessed virtues the community held in high esteem. He was a devoted husband to Clarice, his beautiful, blond wife. That was understandable for not only is Clarice a lovely creature but she has a wicked sense of humor, is bright, intelligent, and an efficient manager of their home, a palace at 915 Franklin Boulevard in River Forest, an exclusive suburb, with an indoor swimming pool, bowling alleys, billiard room, music

room, oriental carpeting, gold-plated doorknobs and bathroom fixtures, and bathtubs of polished onyx. The walls of the living room and dining room are hung with oil paintings by some splendid artists.

Accardo was also a loving father, shielding his children from all exposure to publicity, and a charming host. Like Johnny Torrio and the murderous Genna brothers, Accardo was a devotee of classical music.

A rival who possessed a caustic wit remarked, when told of Accardo's love of classical music, "Yeah, I know." He pointed an imaginary machine gun and yelled, "Rat-tat-tat-tat!" Then shouted, "The bum wouldn't know one opera from another. He thinks Verdi plays third base for the Cubs!"

How, where, and when did Tony Accardo rise to the position he has held for two decades? Accardo was born in Chicago of decent, honest, hard-working parents who were devoted to the church. He grew up in the West Side neighborhood, of the First Ward, a ghetto comprised of Old World Italians. On the periphery were whore houses, saloons, pool rooms, haunts frequented by pimps, thieves, robbers, hustlers of every kind, dope pushers, hoods, and floozies out to trade sex for a good time. A boy had

to fight in order to keep from being maimed or killed in the neighborhood. Accardo could fight. Even in his teens he was big, hard, and rough and came by the adjective in front of his name honestly—*Tough Tony Accardo*.

At twenty, Accardo met Frank Nitti and Jack McGurn, Capone's chief executioners. He asked Nitti for a job.

"What can you do?" Nitti asked.

"Whatever I'm told," Accardo replied. "And can keep my mouth shut." He grinned at Nitti and McGurn.

"Okay, come on. We'll see what the Boss says."

Standing in front of Capone in Al's suite in the Lexington Hotel, Accardo was polite, courteous, but not deferential. A great deal of his imperiousness, as a matter of fact, showed even then. Capone was the one who was impressed.

"Tony Accardo, eh?" Capone said. "How old are you?"

"Twenty."

Capone grunted. He was that age when he came to Chicago from New York to become Torrio's bodyguard and from there rose up the ladder until he held Chicago's underworld in the palm of his hand. He saw something of himself in the young man before him. *He could,* Capone thought pro-

phetically, *do exactly what I did.* He grunted audibly.

Accardo said, "Did you say something?"

Capone shook his head. "No, I didn't. That was only a kind of mental belch." He took a cigar from a humidor on his desk and shoved it into his mouth. "You ever drive a truck?"

"No, but I can learn quick. I think I can drive anything that's got wheels?"

"You think?"

"I know," Accardo replied evenly and without a trace of ego in his tone. "All I want is a chance."

"Okay, you got it. A C-note a week. No regular hours. You drive when you're told, day or night. That okay with you?"

"That's fine."

Capone turned to Nitti. "Put him on. Give him a couple of C's in front. He might need it." He returned his attention to Accardo. "That's a bonus for nothing. You may have to earn it a little later."

"Sure, I understand."

Capone nodded. "Yeah, I think you do. Okay, Frank will tell you what to do."

"Mr. Capone," Accardo said, "if you don't mind, I'd like to be called Joe Batters. I been using that name."

"Why?"

Accardo shrugged. "Maybe

for the same reason you used Al Brown."

Capone let out a short laugh.
"Your family live here?"

"Yes, sir. Good people."

"Okay. Joe Batters. Frank,
Jack, meet Joe Batters."

Nitti said, "All right, Joe,
let's go. I'll introduce you to a
nice big truck and we'll see if
you two can get along."

TONY ACCARDO got along
very well with the truck. He
delivered barrels of beer to
saloons and did it efficiently.
He soon became the best driver
in the gang and Al Capone
began using him as a chauffeur
at odd times.

Capone liked him. He
learned that Accardo didn't
drink, did what he was told at
all times, spoke only when he
was spoken to, and answered all
questions intelligently. Capone
found that he could trust him
and didn't hesitate to talk
about the most intimate work-
ings of the Organization in his
presence, information that
could have sent Capone to
prison for life or to the electric
chair.

Accardo never betrayed his
trust. It was this reputation for
absolute trustworthiness that
eventually took Accardo to the
top. He has maintained this
personal code of ethics to this
very day. It is the one code the



TONY ACCARDO

mobs respect and to which they
pay homage. Its violation
results in death, bloody and
violent.

Accardo was given duties
involving organization and again
proved himself, his innate
intelligence and quick compre-
hension of a problem or
situation resulting in quick
solutions. He was rewarded
generously. He started to dress
in tailor-made clothes, moved
his family to a better neighbor-
hood, married Clarice and
fathered the first of his three
children on whom he doted,
spoiled with fatherly affection

and gifts but held in line with a strict discipline. He had been taught to respect his parents and he carried that teaching over to his own children.

The Old World Italians as well as the first and second generation Italians in the New World carry on the tradition. Moreover, they are open and demonstrative in their affection. A son will not hesitate to kiss his father in public after returning from a trip. Family ties are strong. It is the basis of the strength of the Mafia. Members inter-marry. This brings brothers-in-law, sons-in-law, and, of course, cousins, first and second, into the national alliance.

The list is too long to even begin to mention. Notable examples, of course, were Al Capone and his cousins the Fischettis, as well as Capone's four brothers, John, Matt, Mimi, and Ralph. Also Jake Guzik and his brother Harry. The five Genna brothers. Detroit mobsters married the daughters of Buffalo, New York Mafiosi, and vice versa, as well as those from Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Chicago, St. Louis, and other cities. The Unione Siciliana kept them together.

The amazing rise of Tony Accardo to the position of boss of Chicago and a seat on the Inner Council of the Mafia is all

the more astounding in its character because he had no ties family-wise with anyone in the hierarchy of the National Criminal Syndicate. Clarice even less. His appeal to the Grand Council lay in the fact that he could be trusted in every respect and that he would carry out any order given him by the council, come hell or high water.

Frank Nitti, on the other hand, was suspect, and rightly so. It was believed that he aided Frank J. Wilson, Chief of the United States Secret Service, in gathering evidence against Capone. Surely, he sent word to Nels Tessem and Jay Sullivan, two of Wilson's agents, as to where they could locate Lou Shumway and Freddy Reis, the bookkeepers in Capone's Cicero operations. Shumway was picked up in Miami and Reis in St. Louis. Their testimony helped convict Al Capone.

The Syndicate's connections in the police department brought this information to Accardo.

"That's impossible!" he said. "I won't believe it."

"You'd better believe it, Tony," the detective told him. "It's straight from the horse's mouth."

"Okay then, let me talk to the horse. I want it direct."

The detective shrugged.

"Sorry, Tony. That's as far as I can go with you on this. Keep your eyes open, and don't turn your back."

With Capone in prison, Nitti took over the mob, on Capone's order! Accardo figured that this move counter-acted the detective's story of Nitti's perfidy completely. Surely, if anyone would know whether or not he had been double-crossed Capone would be the first. However, the seed of suspicion that had been planted was like a small irritating ulcer in Accardo's belly. He decided to watch Nitti closely in all of the mob's dealings. He thought often of going to Paul "The Waiter" Ricca or Louis "Little New York" Campagna and tell them what he had been told but decided against it as being detrimental to his interests.

Accardo never got past the sixth grade in school and his speech was more malaprop than ungrammatical—but it was Murray "The Camel" Humphreys who analyzed Accardo accurately. Humphreys was a college graduate who had been with the mob from the day that Capone joined it. He said, "Tony is an ignoramus—but a very, very shrewd ignoramus." It was an apt appraisal.

Despite his lack of formal education, Accardo accomplished what sharpies like

Capone, Luciano, Costello, Lepke Buchalter, Joe Adonis, and many other couldn't. He never served a day in jail despite a record of thirty-seven arrests. He has made mistakes, of course. He does not possess the organizational ability evidenced by Capone, Torrio, or Luciano, yet he has maintained discipline in the ranks. He once said, "Respect or fear. If I can't make 'em respect me I can sure as hell make them fear me, and that's just about the same thing." The discipline he fosters is more stringent than that at West Point, and his edict of "Stay in line or die" is adhered to by everyone in the Organization with the passionate fervor of a Buddhist priest intoning his prayers.

Fate played a big hand in Accardo's rise to the top. When Nitti took over the mob, Ricca and Campagna were his number two and three men in authority. Accardo was number four. Accardo's chances for the top slot appeared slim.

The wily, scheming Nitti, possessor of a Machiavellian mind and the morals of a jungle cat, had killed for Capone. He was, along with Machine-gun Jack McGurn, the chief executioner. No one really knows the number of men Nitti killed. A safe figure would be fifty, give or take five or six. He wasn't

the kind of guy you could knock off easily or plot against. Accardo never let that thought enter his mind. Not for some time, anyway.

Capone was smarting under the harsh life in Alcatraz. At one time there was the chance that he would be paroled after serving a third of his eleven years' sentence but someone applied pressure in Washington and the federal parole board turned down Capone's application for parole. The pressure was applied by Nitti through a powerful politico. Furthermore, after Capone was released, a broken and sick man suffering from an incurable brain disease, Nitti used the power he held in Chicago to send Al to the Cook County Jail for a one-year term on an old charge:

All this chicanery on the part of Nitti had to militate against him, sooner or later. It brought about his downfall; put Campagna and Ricca in prison, and Accardo in the top shot.

Nitti was flooded with an arrogant sense of his power, not only in Chicago but throughout the country. He moved ruthlessly and heedlessly.

Accardo tried to reason with him. "Frank, slow down. You're stepping on a lot of people's toes and some of them are making noises."

Nitti waved a hand in

deprecation. "Aw, crap! I stuff the pockets of them bastards with money. I gotta right to push 'em a little now and then. You just let me handle things, Tony. I'll tell you when I want your advice."

"It may be too late then, Frank."

"Like I said, Tony," Nitti retorted angrily, "I'll ask for your advice when I need it; if then."

It was one of Nitti's big mistakes. Accardo's advice could have saved his life because it was Accardo who learned, first hand, that Nitti had double-crossed Capone. Had Nitti been more friendly or less abrupt with Accardo it is possible that Accardo would have bent his principles a little in favor of Nitti, although he hated a rat and a double-crosser. He did feel a certain kind of loyalty toward Nitti, however, because it was Nitti who had given him his chance in the mob.

TONY ACCARDO was born on April 28, 1906, in the city of Chicago, grew to a powerful five feet ten inches packed solidly in a 190 pound frame, all of it muscle. His kindest critics said of him that most of that muscle was in his head. Aside from a prominent nose he could be considered attrac-

tive. He had black hair, brown eyes, a dark olive complexion. When he came into the big money he dressed in the most expensive tailored clothes money could buy. A Sicilian on both sides of his parents, he was acceptable by virtue of his birth, and later, because of his integrity and his adherence to gangland principles, the rule of Omerta, eligible for election to the presidency of the Unione Siciliano, which, of course, he never attained and never really desired.

"I ain't the kind of guy to sit behind a desk and talk," he said. "President? Do I look like a President?"

No one argued the point that he didn't. A member of the mob, in a not too critical appraisal of Accardo, said, "Tony coulda been president of his sixth grade class but he couldn't memorize the sentence that went with the nomination."

"Yeah?" Willie Heeney said. "What was the sentence?"

"I accept."

The reply brought forth gales of laughter which were instantly silenced as Accardo came out of the elevator and walked toward the group in the lobby of the Lexington Hotel.

Accardo took an extremely dim view of any references to him, in any vein, which



AL CAPONE

reflected on his academic background. He could, and did explode violently, on several occasions when he overheard, and his punishment was swift against his offenders.

Accardo quit school after completing the sixth grade and earned small sums of money which he dutifully brought home to his parents. He was big for his age at sixteen and soon learned that he could earn more money protecting street crap games and poker sessions in private homes from cheistmen. When he was twenty he met

Frank Nitti and Jack McGurn. It was, for him, a fortuitous meeting which changed his entire life.

A sister, Martha, married Dominick Senese, who harbored ambitions to be a big-time hood. When Accardo became a man of importance in the mob he made Senese head of the mayhem squad at the Fulton Street Market. Senese and John Smith were also business agents and officers of Local 703, Produce Drivers Union, affiliated with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

An insight of how the hoodlum element, and this refers to the top men in the Mafia, control the economy of the nation, is contained in the fact that Dominic Senese and a hood named Victor Comforde, an associate of Joey Glimco, a man high in the Chicago mob, owned a controlling share of the Vernon Farm Products Company, a wholesale egg business in the Fulton Street Market. Investigators also brought to light the fact that Frank Senese, a brother of Dominick, and Frank V. Pantaleo, another hood, were also partners in the business.

The Mafia forces itself into legitimate businesses when it can't buy into them legitimately. Other times, a company in financial distress will borrow

money from loan sharks at exorbitant interest rates and when payments lag the mob steps in and takes over. A common example of just how much money is controlled by Mafia hoods was evident in the case of Fred Evans.

Tony Accardo, investigators revealed, had invested heavily in Evans' multiple business enterprises with Joey Glimco as a "beard" or front. Evans was an underling for Murray "The Camel" Humphreys, a member of the original Torrio-Capone mob. Evans controlled, in name only, a large chain of laundries. Union muscle aided Evans and his associates, among them Accardo, Glimco, Cherry Nose Gioe, and the two Senese brothers, to invade and cut heavily into the lucrative business of supplying towels, coveralls, and other supplies to gas stations, garages, and auto rental agencies.

The corporation was a conglomerate which held control of, among other firms, Linen of the Week, Inc., Western Laundry Service, Infant Diaper Service, Dust and Tex Cleaning Company, and the Crib Diaper Service.

Accardo thought that Evans was getting too big, siphoning off too much of the gross profits. Accardo at the time was a member of the Executive

Council of the Chicago Syndicate. Joey Glimco, as head of this phase of the Syndicate's legitimate enterprises, was given the task of "finding a solution to Fred Evans."

In 1959, Evans was picked up by several hoods, tossed into a car, driven to a lonely section of town, yanked out of the car, shoved against a brick wall before three gunmen who pointed sub-machine guns at him.

Evans pleaded for his life. "I'll get out!" he cried. "I'll leave town. I'll never come back. Don't kill me! Don't! Please don't kill me!"

The three men grimaced, pointed their weapons, fired in unison, the heavy slugs tearing Evans' body and face to shreds. The three men got back into the car in a leisurely way, leaving Evans' bloody remains on the dirty street, parts of his flesh pasted against the brown bricks of the walls, hurled there from the force of the three machine guns.

Investigators who checked into the killing located a drawer in a desk in Evans' office in which they found various notations of the financial transactions. One notation read: "Total resources -\$11,000,000." Three safety deposit boxes contained tangible assets in the form of

negotiable stocks and bonds valued at more than \$500,000! Evans also had holdings out of the state which included two luxury hotels in Los Angeles.

The new owners of Evans' enterprises were Tony Accardo, Murray Humphreys, and Joey Glimco. A similar takeover occurred when Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel was executed in Los Angeles and the Chicago mob took over the plush Flamingo Hotel in Las Vegas. And this despite the fact that Siegel was a close associate for many years of Meyer Lansky. At the time, Lansky was the honored dean and counselor to every family in the Mafia Syndicate on financial matters. This emphatically denies the fable of a brotherhood in Mafia circles.

Accardo rose to power immediately after Frank Nitti's death. When Al Capone was released from a federal prison he was ordered to serve an additional year in the Cook County Jail on an old beef. It was Nitti, through his connections in the city, who arranged that because he wanted Capone out of the way. The mystery man of the underworld, Gaetano Ricci, learned of it.

Ricci, whose home base was New York, was a giant of a man. Six feet six inches tall, weighing over 225 pounds, he made a formidable appearance.

Nowhere in any of the many articles and books written by outstanding writers of fact crime is he mentioned. Yet, he was known to the police of New York, Miami, Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, Las Vegas, and other major cities in the country. He was respected and revered by the underworld.

Ricci came to Chicago, his heart full of anger against Nitti. He talked with Accardo, at the time second in command. He spoke with a great deal of passion.

"It is enough!" Ricci thundered. His voice shook. "Did not Al suffer enough? Why should Nitti have done this to him?" He pounded the desk in front of him. "I leave him in your hands. I am confident, my friend, that you will solve this matter satisfactorily."

Accardo solved it satisfactorily. How he did it remains unknown to this day except to those who were actually connected with the Nitti episode. However, if Nitti was wily, a schemer, artful, then Accardo was his opposite. Accardo was direct. He moved in a straight line, without deviation toward the objective. If he were rough, completely abysmal and amoral, he was nonetheless possessed of great innate intelligence. His record dates back to 1922. The police department of Chicago

lists him under File #D-83436, with more than two score arrests on charges of carrying concealed weapons, extortion, kidnaping, murder, and gambling. He was convicted only once, on a charge of income tax evasion and was sentenced to six years in prison and fined \$15,000. He appealed the conviction and was acquitted in a second trial.

He has never spent a single night in a jail cell, and that says a great deal for his shrewdness. It is on record he was a prime suspect in more than a dozen murders, among them the killings of Joe Aiello, Mike Heitler, a notorious brothel keeper, Jack Zuta, ousted police captain William Drury, Attorney Marvin Bas, James Ragen, owner of Continental Press which the Chicago mob took over after Ragen's death, and as one of the gunmen in the St. Valentine's Day Massacre.

Even when he was second in command to Nitti he was held in higher esteem by Jake Guzik, the bag man for the Syndicate, and Charlie and Rocco Fischetti, cousins of Caponè, than Nitti. Murray Humprheys, it will be recalled, said it succinctly, "Tony is an ignoramus—but a very, very shrewd ignoramus."

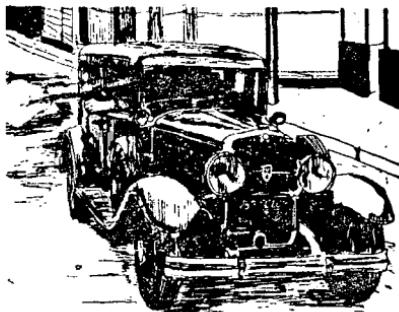
Accardo was cited for contempt of Congress in the Kefauver hearings when he took

the Fifth Amendment 144 times before the McClellan Committee rather than reveal any information on mob activities. He escaped a jail term from that contempt charge too.

He is known to be involved in more than a score of enterprises outside the workings of the Syndicate. His interests, in which he has invested heavily, include trucking, coal, lumber, bakery, laundries, restaurants, hotels, travel agencies, currency exchanges, pieces of Las Vegas casinos, Miami hotels and motels. He is known to have considerable amounts invested throughout the states of Florida, Nevada, Arizona, California, and in France, Italy, and South America. It is impossible to estimate his wealth.

From the time he rose to absolute power in 1943, at the time of Nitti's death, until he turned over the reins to Sam Giancana in 1956, he amassed a fortune, according to the most informed sources, totaling hundreds of millions of dollars. At this writing he is chairman of the Syndicate's board of directors and one of the top men in the nation's hierarchy of the Mafia.

The rise to the top in the Mafia is not achieved easily. It is too often done by the route of mayhem and murder, but more by a firm loyalty to those



above, and by the law of Omerta, the law of silence. Accardo followed all three principles devotedly.

AFTER CAPONE was convicted and sent to prison, and Nitti was named the number one man by Al, there was a depression in the nation. It was as evident in Chicago as it was elsewhere in the country. World War I veterans were selling apples on practically every corner in Chicago's Loop, the main business section. Money was as tight as a miser's fist.

But not with the Syndicate. Gambling joints were all over the city, more than two score of them, ranging from bookie joints that would take any kind of action from a buck to ten thousand dollars. In a place like the Gym Club in the Loop as much as a half million dollars changed hands on a Saturday when baseball, football, or

basketball was the game of the season.

Brothels were everywhere. The doxies, street hustlers, call girls, from the fifty-dollar and hundred dollar a trick broads right down to the two-buck whores, all paid tribute to the Syndicate. In many of the houses run by the Syndicate there were as many as fifty girls working around the clock. It brought back the days of the red light district in the First Ward that ran from 17th Street to 22nd Street and from Wabash to Clark Streets known then as the South Side levee. There were 130 whorehouses, by actual count, in the district, all of them running wide open. Someone had to police these places.

The three top men, Paul "The Waiter" Ricca, Cherry Nose Gioe, and Frank Diamond, felt it beneath them. Nitti assigned Accardo, who was the number four man. Accardo took to the duties of keeping the whores and bookies in line like a fish takes to water. He browbeat the pimps, madams, and bookies. When necessary, he used his brute force to demonstrate the necessity for complete cooperation and honesty in the matter of an honest count in the proceeds.

Accardo brought the saloons

into line, the strip tease dives, clip joints, night clubs, cocktail bars, shady hotels, and the gambling joints, big and little, and schooled them that there were no such things as independents.

"Everybody pays off," he declared. "That way you run, see. But more important, you also buy yourself a license to live. How about that, huh?"

There were some objections by madams of houses. One of them, a woman named Fat Sally who ran a house on 19th Street off Wabash, gave Accardo an argument.

"How do I know you're going to give me and the girls all this protection you're talking about? I ain't never seen you before in my life. To me you're just another hood trying to muscle in."

"Sally," Accardo said, and smiled crookedly, "you're a pretty smart girl. But right now you're talking yourself into a mouth of missing teeth. I said the Syndicate is taking over. Either you run it with us or not at all."

"Real tough, huh? Well, let me tell you something, Mr. Big Shot, I've had guys like you in here before. They didn't scare me and you don't either. You're not going to kill me, that much I know. A few blows? So what? I've taken

them all my life. Go ahead and hit me."

Accardo grinned. "Sure, Sally, like you say."

She was completely unaware of his next move, certain he would only talk, so when his fist flashed into her belly she was as much surprised as she was shocked by the terrific punch he threw at her. She doubled up and fell to the floor, her breath knocked out of her.

"Get up, you stupid broad!" Accardo told her. "Get up or I'll kick your guts out!"

Sally crawled to a sitting position. She was still gasping for breath. She managed to get up on her hands and knees first, much like a fighter who has been floored and struggling to beat the count, and then she rose slowly to her feet.

"You've hurt me," she mumbled, and held both hands to her stomach.

"That was a teaser, Sally. The next time you give me any of your lip your mouth is going to disappear into your chest." He tapped her breast with a forefinger. "You understand me now, Sally?"

"Okay, okay. Now take that damn finger out of my chest. What's your best offer?"

"Now you're being smart. You're going to run this joint like you have. The Syndicate

will supply you with new girls every two weeks. We move the girls around. The Syndicate will pay for protection. In case of a bust, the Syndicate will bail out the girls, and you, and pay for the mouthpiece and the fines. The girls will eat here, and we'll supply the food, towel and linen service. We'll also pay the rent. How does that suit you?"

"How much of the take is the Syndicate going to want for all this jolly service?"

"Seventy-five per cent. The girls get fifty per cent of their take, less the fees for rent, food, linen service, bail and fines. The mouth piece is free. We keep him on a retainer."

"Seventy-five per cent!" Sally screamed. "Mister, you're bringing back slavery. The girls won't stand for it."

"Sure they will. Bring them in. All of them. I'll convince them. Nice and easy." He smiled. "No rough stuff. I don't like to hit a girl. Go ahead, Sally."

The girls came in, an even dozen, some of them in their late teens. Accardo looked them over. His eyes fell on a pretty blond. "How old are you, Sister?"

"Who me?" the girl answered.

"Yeah, you. How old are you?"

"Twenty."

"You're a liar. I'll ask you again. How old?" There was a hard note in his voice.

"Seventeen," she blurted out.

"Where you from?"

"Davenport, Iowa."

"How long you been in Chicago?"

"A month."

"Who put you in this house?"

"A friend."

"A friend, huh? You mean a pimp, don't you? Get your clothes and bring them back here."

"What for? I live here."

"I said to get your clothes! Get them!"

While she was gone, Accardo explained the Syndicate's plan to the other girls. "We're going to be fair about this," he said. "The important thing is that you girls will never have to do any time for working here." He turned to the big hood beside him. "What's the name of the beef for working in a joint?"

The big hood shrugged. "I think it's called *Soliciting and Selling*. Or something."

Accardo grunted. "You're stupid. Well, whatever it is, you girls won't get busted. But if you do, you'll be out in a hot minute. Okay?"

The young blonde came in then with a small battered suitcase and set it down in front

of her. She had changed into a print dress, plain black pumps, and a pert little hat. She looked like a high school junior ready for a date. She stared at Accardo questioningly.

Accardo dug a hand into a pocket of his trousers, took out a roll of bills and counted out several large ones. "Here's a hundred bucks, Sister. You get on the first bus back to Davenport and stay there. If I ever see you in Chicago, in one of these joints, I'll break both your arms and legs, see."

Sally said, "A hood with a heart. That's a new one."

"Yeah, isn't it?" Accardo shot back. He turned to the blond. "Okay, Sister. Take off."

TONY ACCARDO'S success in organizing and policing the brothels and gambling joints added to his stature in the Syndicate. The big break came when the three top men over him—Paul "The Waiter" Ricca, Louis "Little New York" Campagna, and Frank Diamond along with Frank Nitti—became involved in the infamous shakedown of the movie industry.

George Browne, International President of I.A.T.S.E., and fat Willie Bioff, a notorious pander, decided to follow in the footsteps of Tommy Maloy,



JACK McGURN

who headed Local 110 of the Motion Picture Operators Union. Maloy shook down every theater owner in the city for sums ranging from \$500 to \$5,000 on threats of calling a strike and thus shutting the theater down.

Maloy was a tough boy. He chauffeured for a time for Mossy Enright, head of the building-trades unions. Enright taught Maloy a great deal, but not enough to keep him from getting murdered when the Syndicate decided to take over. In contrast, Bioff was a weakling and a coward; Browne

little better. How Bioff persuaded Browne to give him a piece of the action in the deal is unknown and must be regarded with a great deal of askance. Bioff, a pimp who handled street walkers and wornout whores, went in over his head and took Browne with him.

What was amazing in the operation was the success the two achieved from the very outset. They first tackled the Balaban and Katz chain of theaters. The chain included the largest movie houses in the Loop, the State Lake, Chicago, Oriental, and several others, as well as many houses in the outlying districts. They then went after the others.

Nothing that happens in Chicago unions escapes the Syndicate, and Frank Nitti heard of Browne and Bioff's racket. He ordered the two picked up and brought to the Lexington Hotel. In the suite at the time were Nitti, Accardo, Ricca, Gioe, Little New York Louis Campagna, and Nick Circella, alias Nick Dean, boyfriend of Estelle Carey who was fated to be brutally slain because of him.

Nitti said, "You guys got yourself a sweet racket. How come you didn't let me know you were shaking down everybody in the business?"

Browne fumbled around for words in explanation.

Nitti slapped a palm on the desk. "Crap! You hear me? Crap!" He pointed a forefinger at Browne. "You appoint Circella in place of Tommy Maloy as boss of Local 110. Next, we want fifty per cent of the take. You got any objections?"

"No, no," Browne answered hastily. "But how about Maloy? He won't take this lying down."

Nitti let out a raucous laugh. "That's where he's going to be, lying down! You do like I say and leave Maloy to me. Now, one more thing. You guys are playing for peanuts. I'm going to send you two out to the Coast, to Hollywood. You do the same thing to those big shot producers out there that you're doing to the movie theater owners here. Only not for the same money. Jack up the ante. Let's say a hundred grand, or two hundred grand. They'll pay off. They won't want their studios shut down. I'll send Circella out there after you have it set up. Okay, that's it."

After Browne and Bioff left, Accardo said, "I think we're asking for trouble with those two. They're not our kind of people, Frank. What do we need them for?"

"Front men! Beards!" Nitti snapped. "Besides, Browne al-

ready has the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees and Motion Picture Operators in his pocket. Browne and Bioff will do the shaking down and we'll take the money."

"Bioff is a pimp. You can't trust a pimp."

"I don't have to trust him, Tony. He has to trust me. Get it?"

Accardo shrugged. "Okay, you're the boss."

"That's right. I'll call the shots."

Browne and Bioff did their work well in Hollywood. The amazing aspect in the shake-down operation was the type of men who submitted to it. Nicholas Schenck and his brother Joseph of MGM, at the time the major film producing company of the world; Louis B. Mayer, also of MGM; Sidney B. Kent, president of 20th Century-Fox; and Major Albert Warner of Warner Brothers. These men virtually controlled the movie industry.

In Chicago, meanwhile, Frank Nitti took care of Tommy Maloy. A car filled with Syndicate gunmen chased Maloy up and down a darkened Chicago street in the early hours of the morning, caught up with him, and ended his life with bursts from two machine guns.

Nick Circella now controlled Local 110.

There were several other killings of union officials who objected to Circella. Circella then took over control of the union left by Browne and the I.A.T.S.E. was in the pockets of the Syndicate.

The next time you go to a movie look for the IATSE imprimatur. It appears on every motion picture production made in every studio in the world. That's the sphere it covers. The IATSE can close down any studio it pleases, for real or fancied reasons, simply by calling a strike of its membership. It happened. The studios were backed against a wall, and the Syndicate ruled the picture industry.

Nitti was elated at the success of the operation. Accardo was not. Accardo's intuition, his innate intelligence, told him the whole thing would bust wide open and blow up in the face of the Syndicate. He wanted no part of it and said so.

He was proved right.

Nitti called Browne in Hollywood and told him to take Bioff with him and go to New York. "I want you to line up the studio executives there and put them in line. Yeah, that's it. Line 'em up and put 'em in line. That's good, huh?"

"Sure, Frank. We'll take a train at the end of the week."

When Nitti hung up the phone, Accardo said, "Frank, there's going to be big trouble. These guys are too big. They got too much power. They'll use it against us. Why don't you drop it now. We've taken millions out of Hollywood. Isn't that enough?"

Nitti banged a fist down on the desk. "Listen, Tony, and listen good. I brought you into the mob. I taught you a lot. I helped move you up. I'm boss. I do the thinking around here and I give the orders. All you gotta do is follow them. You don't want a split of this money? Fine. But don't tell me how to run the thing, see?"

Accardo shrugged. "Okay. Like you say."

As Accardo predicted, the shakedown blew up in the Syndicate's face and sent the top men to prison when Bioff and Browne turned State's evidence.

With Nitti out of the way and Accardo in the top slot, things moved faster and smoother. Accardo was given important lessons in the value of controlling unions by Lepke Buchalter and Lucky Luciano when Accardo visited New York and he remembered them. He set out to take over as many as he could.

Accardo's first move was against the Chicago Restaurant Association. He sent some of the toughest hoods in the mob to *influence* the Association that he was the man to head it, if not as its president than as the dictator behind the office. The violence that followed resembled a small-scale war. Owners were beaten and their restaurants fouled by stink-bombs. Windows were smashed. Many of the patrons were slugged, some with baseball bats. The cars of both owners and patrons were damaged. Tires were slashed. Sugar was poured into gasoline tanks. Many of the cars were wired with black-powder and dynamite bombs. There were several murders as a clincher.

The Chicago Restaurant Association had enough. They wanted no more trouble. It was suggested to the heads of the Association that they hire Abraham Teitelbaum, an attorney who defended Al Capone, as their labor relations counsel. It was further suggested that Abe Teitelbaum's salary be a round \$125,000 a year. The Association attempted to negotiate a lesser figure but finally agreed to the suggested salary. Teitelbaum then engaged Louis Romano as his labor relations expert. Romano was president of Local 278, Waiters, Waitresses,

Bartenders, and Miscellaneous Workers Union. The Syndicate now had full control of the Chicago Restaurant Association.

The owners of restaurants were forced to pay an initiation fee and membership fee for each of their employees. The employees were not even told they were members of a Union and did not have recourse to a Union in case of a complaint. The Syndicate collected dues on members who changed jobs, left the city, or died. The restaurant owners paid.

"Hell," one of the owners said, "I'd rather pay than have them put me out of business."

AS A UNION, The Chicago Restaurant Association was strictly a paper organization. Members were members in name only. There were no stewards, no benefits, welfare plan, or retirement plan. What it was in fact was an ideal shakedown racket.

Accardo now insisted that the restaurant owners buy Syndicate beer. Then, to use the Syndicate linen service, garbage disposal, laundry, dry cleaning, vending machines, and to purchase all their appliances and fixtures.

Abraham Teitelbaum suggested to Accardo that it would be in the interest of the

restaurant owners if they contributed to a "voluntary fund" for use in case labor troubles arose.

"Good idea," Accardo said. "Set it up."

The take was in the millions through this fund alone. As it was, the owners were coming out ahead in the deal. They paid wages far below scale. Workers had no protection. It was either take what was offered or be out of work.

Teitelbaum was growing rich, but not as rich as Accardo. The end came for Teitelbaum in 1953 when Accardo decided the lawyer had outlived his usefulness.

Paul "Needlenose" Labriola and James "Jimmy the Arm" Weinberg paid Teitelbaum a visit in his office and threatened to do two things. First, beat him half to death and then to toss him out a window. The two hoods had organized the Cook County Licensed Beverage Dealers Association, another paper organization set up to shake down the owners of liquor establishments. Teitelbaum backed down before the two hoods and agreed to their demands to surrender that portion of the Chicago Restaurant Association involving bartenders.

When Accardo heard of the move he blew his top. He fired



Teitelbaum on the spot. A short time later, Labriola and Weinberg were found in the trunks of their cars. They had been garroted after being severely beaten.

Sam Giancana, Accardo's righthand man, suggested that Anthony V. Champagne, Giancana's mouth piece, be appointed in Teitelbaum's place. Accardo agreed. Champagne then fired Romano and hired Sam English as Assistant Labor Relations Director. Sam English was a brother of Charles English who was the Syndicate's man in the Twenty-ninth Ward and a partner of Giancana in many enterprises. Accardo was fond of Romano and gave him pieces

of several rackets which more than satisfied him.

Champagne didn't last a year. He stepped out of line by holding back payoffs and Accardo blew his top again. He ordered Champagne removed in the usual gangland fashion. Sam Giancana asked Accardo to give Champagne a break.

"The guy just made a stupid mistake, Tony," Giancana said. "Toss him out. That should be enough punishment."

Accardo relented and Champagne was allowed to live. Accardo then appointed Thomas E. Keane, alderman and committeeman of the Thirty-first Ward. He represented the Chicago Restaurant Association at Springfield when he was a member of the state legislature. He later became city council floor leader for Mayor Richard J. Daley. Daley, like John "Bathhouse" Coughlin, is a master of the malaprop. In defending Keane against charges that the legislator was incompetent, Daley said, "I resent the insinuendo in each respect."

The fear that Accardo placed in the hearts of men, especially those whom he threw out of the Syndicate, was evidenced in 1958 when Teitelbaum and Champagne appeared before the McClellan Committee. Both men invoked the Fifth Amend-

ment more than a score of times.

Louis Romano, loyal to Accardo, who also appeared before the Committee, threw the hearing into an uproar by his brazen and overbearing conduct.

Chief Counsel Robert F. Kennedy asked Romano about the many murders attributed to him. Romano half-rose in his chair and pointed a finger at Kennedy, his face purple with anger.

"Why don't you go dig up all the dead people in the cemeteries and ask me if I killed them too, you Chinaman!"

The Committee members learned later that "Chinaman" was another name for bagman or payoff man in Syndicate parlance. Kennedy raked Romano over the coals.

The Committee got no place in their investigation of Chicago's restaurant industry despite the fact that testimony brought out the fact that more than two score restaurants had been burned down. In each case, police authorities labeled the fires as ARSON!

Owners of restaurants refused to state that they were paying off to the Syndicate, to admit there was any form of shakedown, or that they were forced to buy any Syndicate service or product.

In 1960, Accardo was convicted of income tax evasion on pressure by Sheriff Richard B. Ogilvie, a former federal attorney. The conviction was reversed by the United States Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago.

In his campaign for reelection, Sheriff Ogilvie learned that Sam (Sam Mooney) Giancana had issued orders that he had to be stopped. Precinct captains, under orders from the Syndicate, went from house to house and told the voters that voting for Ogilvie would be an act that would give "the people who have helped you the greatest displeasure." About two weeks later, Ogilvie was informed that Giancana had declared that Ogilvie was a dead duck and there was no chance of his being reelected.

Giancana was wrong. Despite the precinct captains' work, the voters of Cook County reelected Ogilvie in the hopes he would be able to stop the Syndicate. Backing up his campaign promises, Ogilvie led a series of raids on Syndicate bookie and gambling joints in Cicero. Working with sledge hammers and axes, Ogilvie's men battered down steel doors and smashed every piece of equipment in each place. No one of any importance was arrested and the entire series of

raids took on the aspect of a witch hunt.

Seymour Simon, president of the Cook County board of commissioners, and the man who controlled and set the budget for the sheriff's department, declared that the raids were too costly.

"They have turned up nothing of value in halting gambling. No sooner is a place closed then it is opened again and running bigger than ever. I'm calling the raids off."

Accardo had won again.

There were ugly rumors that Simon may have been in the employ of the Syndicate and so ordered the raids be stopped. Simon was cleared of all guilt on his demand for an investigation of the rumors. He was, in truth, an honorable and honest public official.

In the meantime, several murders occurred. One of them was the killing of Danny Stanton. Stanton, a close friend of Frank Nitti's, had once been connected with the Syndicate as a union organizer. With the death of Nitti, Stanton left the Syndicate and went on his own. A fatal error. He gained control of the Checkroom Attendants Union which was part and parcel of the Chicago Restaurant Association. Stanton was ordered to step out and relinquish the Union. He spat in the face

of the man Accardo had sent to deliver the ultimatum, "Give it up or else."

Many a self-styled tough guy learned to his regret that to defy that final, uncompromising demand is to sign a death warrant for himself. Stanton was shot down on a Chicago street. He had beaten a murder rap in Wisconsin, pushed around a lot of minor labor leaders at a time when he had the Syndicate behind him. Without the terrifying power of the Syndicate behind him he was no more than a clay pigeon. The two gunmen met him face to face, pointed their guns at his heart, and blew it to shreds.

Accardo proved he was following Capone's modus operandi time and time again. He was the cunning architect of a new type criminal syndicate that polished up the rough edges of the operations once run by Dion O'Bannion, Johnny Torrio, Al Capone, and Frank Nitti. He had learned the way from two masters, Louis Lepke Buchalter and Charlie Luciano.

Accardo took over the Chicago Street Cleaning Union. In this he took a page from the methods introduced by Big Tim Murphy, one of the greatest paradoxes in Chicago's criminal history. Murphy had been a state legislator. He could have

made the governor's chair. Instead, he chose the field of crime and touched all the bases—mayhem, rape, extortion, mail robbery, and murder. Like Buchalter, who followed him almost a decade later, Murphy played both ends to the middle. He collected from the unions and from both business and industry.

First he started labor troubles by sending his goons to shops with orders to "wreck them a little." He then called on the owners and told them he could stop the trouble in consideration of a certain amount each week. When they paid, he then sent other men around to tell the owners or bosses that the workers were demanding more pay. The increases he asked were exorbitant. The owners argued for lesser amounts. He said he would try to settle the demands at some place between the two—the owners' offer and the union's demands. Having established that, he went to the union and told the officers he could get the rank and file an increase in hourly rates if the union would agree to increase the dues of each member of the union and pay him twenty-five per cent of the total.

That was Accardo's method. He not only took a leaf from Murphy's book but took the

whole book and then revised it to suit the prevailing economy. Accardo muscled in on almost every union in the city, including the machinery of the Municipal Courts. He was able to place his own men in court offices and alongside some judicial benches so he could have advance warning on the issuance of warrants and other legal actions.

Accardo's invasion of the unions was nothing new. He just did it better than his predecessors. Before him, Joe D'Andrea was credited with introducing the peon system whereby he extorted money from Italian laborers working in the city's sewer system. D'Andrea was president of the Sewer and Tunnel Miners' Union. He was killed in a labor war.

Tony D'Andrea, no relation to Joe, then took over. Tony D'Andrea, a Mafia bigshot, was international president of the Hod Carriers Union and an ex-convict. He, too, was murdered.

Michael J. "Umbrella Mike" Boyle, who served prison sentences for restraint of trade and contempt of court, bossed the electrical workers union. A federal judge once castigated him as "blackmailer, highwayman, a betrayer of labor and a leech on commerce."

Tony Accardo has escaped

such embarrassing confrontations with a member of the judiciary. This graduate of the sixth grade of an elementary school is, as Murray Humphreys said, "An ignoramus but a very very shrewd ignoramus." He is more than that. He is perhaps the shrewdest of all the gang leaders, past and present, and that includes his mentors, Capone, Buchalter, and Luciano, for he has never seen the inside of a jail or prison cell, and never will. He takes care of his family and his friends. His son, Anthony, has been on a movie union payroll for years.

Murray Humphreys' brother Jack is the boss of two large gambling establishments under Syndicate ownership and also on the payroll of the movie operators union.

Tough Tony Accardo, sleek, smooth, one of the best dressed men in the world, a millionaire residing in a mansion, married to a beautiful woman, the only woman he has ever known in his life, devoted to her in the true Old World Italian style. He came up the hard way, with his fists, a gun in his hand, and an observer of the code of the underworld to the point of religious fanaticism. All the others before him were killed or died in exile with few exceptions. Tough Tony Accardo. Tough and just as smart.

SOME HOLDS BARRED

Solve—if you can—the macabre riddle of the man who shot himself in the head and died instantly—then cocked his gun to be ready for the next victim!

by RANDALL GARRETT

THE OLD HOUSE was two blocks from Haight Street. The homicide car pulled up in front of it and eased into the open space between two marked patrol cars. The driver tried to get out and around the car before Lieutenant Fran Dixon could open the door, but as usual he didn't make it. Lieutenant Dixon was already stepping to the curb.

Sergeant Curtis knew better than to offer her a hand. He waited until the lieutenant was on the sidewalk, then he shut the car door and locked it. In this neighborhood there was no greater idiocy than leaving a car unlocked; some junkie might rip it off, even with two patrol cars parked fore and aft.

Fran Dixon had her ID out

as two patrolmen came toward her.

"Dixon. Homicide," she said evenly.

The two cops came to a sudden halt and saluted. Neither of them had ever met her, but both of them had damn well heard of Lieutenant Fran Dixon. She stood just two inches under six feet, and had caramel brown eyes that could become hard or soft at will. She wore a dark green suit with a skirt that was neither mini nor midi, but about halfway between, showing an excellent length of beautiful legs.

The .38 Colt Cobra on her right hip was hidden by the dark green jacket, but it was available enough for her to get



it out and firing in something like three-fifths of a second.

When the two uniformed officers had identified themselves, Fran looked at the older one and said: "What's the picture, Martinez?"

"Guy shot to death, Lieutenant. Narcotics got a reliable tip that this place was loaded with junk, so we came to hit it. So far, we haven't found any dope, but there's a body up there in a bedroom—dead when

we hit the place. Maybe you better talk to Sergeant Killenan, Lieutenant."

"Where is he?" Fran asked.

Patrolman Martinez pointed. "Upstairs. He's got a suspect."

Fran Dixon sighed. "No doubt he does." She knew Killenan. She turned to Sergeant Curtis. "Stay here and do some PR work. We're beginning to get a little bit of a crowd. Tell them that this is not a narc bust, but that someone has been badly hurt, and—" She looked suddenly at Officer Martinez. "The ambulance has been called?" she asked.

"Yes, sir—uh, ma'am."

She ignored the slip; she was used to it. She looked back at Curtis. "Tell them that someone has been badly hurt, and that an ambulance is coming to take them to the hospital. Tell them it was an accident of some kind, but that you don't know all the details. Get it?"

Curtis grinned. "Got it."

Fran grinned back. "Good."

That bit of reparté was a joke they shared.

Fran Dixon went up the steps of the old two-story house, identified herself to the cop at the door, and went on up the worn stairway to the upper floor. Another uniformed cop pointed down the dingy hallway toward a door.

"Sergeant Killenan's down there, ma'am."

The bedroom wasn't exactly dirty, Fran thought, but it was sure as hell littered. There were clothes and books all over the place. She wondered whether that was the natural state of the room or a state induced by the narc squad when they searched the place. Probably fifty-fifty, she decided.

Sergeant Killenan sat in a stout-looking wooden chair, facing three people sitting on an unmade bed. He turned his round Irish face toward Fran when she entered the room. His eyebrows went up.

"They sent you, Lieutenant?"

"I've got the duty," she said. "Why not?"

"Well, this is a tough neighborhood, ma'am," he said, standing up. "A lady might get hurt, and—"

"I'm a lady only when I'm off duty, Sergeant," Fran said coldly. "Who are these people?"

Before the sergeant could answer, the big, hulky, scowling young man at the end of the bed said: "So we got a broad fuzz. What's she gonna do? Give us a parking ticket?"

Killenan, big, wide, and suddenly mean-looking, turned toward the man. When he spoke, his voice was hard.



"You'll show a little respect around here, buster, or you'll get your goddam head kicked in. Got that?"

The two women seated next to the hulky man opened their mouths to speak, but Lieutenant Dixon beat them to it. "Hold it!" Her voice was firm, crisp, and authoritative. "Let's not start any shouting match until we find out what's happened. I'm not here to bust anybody unless they've committed murder. The sooner we

find out what happened, the sooner we can get out of here and leave you people alone. Sergeant Killenan, put one of your men in here while we go out and look at the body."

Killenan, still scowling, said: "Yes, ma'am! Cardona!"

The cop who had been standing out in the hall came in quickly, his hand on the butt of his .357 Magnum.

"Watch these people," Killenan said. "The Lieutenant and I got business."

Dixon and Killenan went out into the hallway while Cardona took over. When the door closed, Fran turned to Killenan and repeated: "Who are those people?"

The sergeant took a deep breath. It bothered him to take orders from a woman; it confused his sense of values. But he knew damn good and well where Fran Dixon stood with the department.

"The big crud at the end," he said, "the one with the big mouth, is a guy named Larry Postman. I checked his driver's license. The old lady sitting next to him is his mother, Ellen Postman—or so she says. No ID; she doesn't drive a car. The little girl says her name is Louise Smith, says she's nineteen. Looks more like fifteen or sixteen to me. No ID. She refers to Larry Postman as 'my old

man'. Apparently she's been—uh—sleeping with him for about six months."

"Who's the dead man?" Fran Dixon asked.

"Guy named Wade Broadhurst. They called him Hassan the Assassin, said he was a hashhead. Smoked hashish."

Fran didn't bother to say that she knew what a hashhead was; she was used to having men explain the obvious to her.

"All right," she said, "we have a big crud, an old lady with arthritic hands, and a little girl who doesn't weigh more than ninety pounds. What's their story?"

"They all three claim it was suicide. And they're lying in their teeth, Lieutenant. Want to come take a look?"

Fran Dixon held back a sarcastic remark and said: "That's what I'm here for. Where is he?"

Killenan led her down the hall to another bedroom. He opened the door and let her take a look.

The room was eight-by-ten; no more. It didn't look quite as cluttered as the rest of the house, but it was far from neat.

The messiest part was the body. The man was on a mattress which lay on the floor against the left wall. Even from the door, it was obvious what had happened. A bullet had

entered his right temple, making a wound the size of a man's thumb. It had exited by taking away most of the left side of his skull. The splatter across the bed and wall was not pleasant to look at.

The man's right hand was flung out across the floor, and near it was a revolver.

"The narc squad didn't search this room, did they?" Fran asked.

"No, ma'am, we didn't. We called Homicide as soon as we opened the door. I figured Lieutenant Tokuwara would want his lab men in here before we touched anything. It looked funny. Take a look at that gun, and you'll see what I mean."

Fran stepped carefully into the room, knelt, and looked at the gun without touching it.

"Damned unusual," she murmured. "You don't find these very often."

"You damn sure don't, Lieutenant," Killenan said firmly.

"It's an unusual gun," Fran said, "but what's so funny about it?"

There was a long pause. Utter silence from Killenan.

Fran turned her head around and looked at the narc squad sergeant. He was staring at her as though she were an absolute moron.

Fran got to her feet and

dusted off her hands. "Okay, Sergeant; I repeat: What's so funny about that gun?"

Killenan looked as though he'd been fed a faceful of alum.

"Well, ma'am," he said carefully, "in case you hadn't noticed, that revolver is *cocked*."

"I noticed that," Fran said dryly. "It's rather obvious."

"Well then, it couldn't be suicide, could it?" The sergeant's voice was still careful.

"Why not?"

Sergeant Killenan blew his cool in a splash of verbal pyrotechnics.

"Because, goddam it, woman, a man don't stick a goddam revolver up against the side of his goddam head, blow his goddam brains out, and then stay alive long enough to *recock* the goddam hammer! It goddam well ain't humanly possible!"

Lieutenant Fran Dixon smiled gently at the sergeant. When she spoke, her voice was soft. "You are goddam well correct, Sergeant. But have you looked at that goddam revolver?"

Suddenly flustered, Killenan blinked. "Yeah. I looked at it," he said.

"Did you see the zig-zag grooves around the cylinder?"

"Yeah. I mean, yes, sir. I mean, yes, ma'am."

"Do you know what kind of gun that is, Sergeant Killenan?"

"Um. No, ma'am."

"That weapon happens to be a .455 Webley-Fosbery automatic revolver. British-made, back in—"

There was a sudden flurry of footsteps on the stairway, and both Fran and Killenan stepped out of the death room to look down the hall.

"It's Tokuwara and the lab squad," Fran said. "While they are doing their bit, you and I will go over and ask some questions of our happy trio."

Twenty-five minutes later, Lieutenant Dixon had a reasonably coherent idea of what had happened, although she knew very well that one of the three was lying.

The weapon had belonged to Broadhurst. A check via police radio showed that he had actually registered the .455 with the San Francisco Police Department.

Broadhurst had been one of the only two people living in the house who had jobs. There were eleven people living there, but seven of them were in a park down near San Jose, attending an esbat, and could be eliminated as suspects.

The narcotic squad had surrounded the house to make the bust, and all of them had heard the .455 go off. It hadn't

been a firecracker, or a shot other than the death shot, because the first officer to arrive in the death room got there before a minute had passed. And the body had still been twitching, as often happens after severe head wounds. The blood was still running, and the smell of cordite from the old British cartridge was still strong.

The time of death, then, had been established, and the officers surrounding the house had stated that no one had gone in or out since the shot, with the exception of the investigators.

So, Fran told herself, there were exactly four suspects. Any one of the three live ones might be guilty of murder; the dead one might be guilty of suicide.

The three didn't alibi each other, which was a blessing. Little Louise claimed she had been in her bedroom at the other end of the long hall when the shot sounded; she got up from her bed and looked out the door of her room, but had seen nothing until the police arrived, less than a minute later.

Ellen Postman, the sixty-year-old woman with the arthritic hands, had, according to her story, been downstairs in the kitchen making coffee when the .455 went off. Since she had been the one to open the

door when the officers knocked, her story seemed fairly straightforward. But she could just as easily have come down from upstairs as from the kitchen.

Larry Postman said he had been in the john. He had heard the blast of the gunshot, but by the time he was ready to go anywhere, the place was "full of fuzz." Officer Cardona corroborated that last part of his story, that he had been coming out of the john, but there was no way of knowing just how long he had been in there.

By the time Lieutenant Frank Dixon had extracted all that information from the three suspects, the ambulance had come and gone, and Sergeant Curtis, having done his PR work, was ready to take over. Fran let him continue with the questioning, and went out into the hall with Sergeant Killenan.

Killenan was fuming with frustration. "Lieutenant, I was sure that goddam Larry Postman done it. But now it looks like maybe it was suicide, except for that cocked revolver. Whatever kind of a gun it is, how could it recoil itself?"

"I wouldn't expect a narcotics squad man to know anything about hand weapons," Fran said softly. "Nor a vice squad man either, for that matter."

Let's go talk to Lieutenant Tokuwara."

Outside the death room, some of the technicians were packing up their cameras and other gear. There were still men working inside.

Tokuwara took his cigar from his mouth, bowed low from the waist, and said: "Ah, so, Rootenant Dixon. Can number person be of assistance?"

"Knock it off, Toku," Fran said with a slight smile. "I want to know about that gun."

Tokuwara stuck his cigar back in his mouth and talked around it. "It's a point four-five-five Webley-Fosbery automatic revolver, Fran. It did the job, all right. The slug went right on through; the boys dug it out of the wall. There were heavy powder burns around the entrance wound, so it could have been suicide.

"There were a couple of prints on the barrel and on the cylinder, both of them his. Smudges on the grip and trigger, unidentifiable. You know what a bitch of a job it is to get prints off a grip or trigger."

"I know," Fran said. "Are you through with it?"

"Sure." Tokuwara turned his head. "Harry, give me that gun."

The technician gave Toku-

wara the death weapon, and Tokuwara handed it to Fran.

She hefted the big revolver and said: "It's a beauty. I wonder where he got it." She checked the cylinder and looked at Tokuwara.

"We took out five live cartridges and an empty," he said through a cloud of cigar smoke. "We've got 'em marked, and we've got the corresponding positions on the chambers marked."

"Lieutenant, ma'am." Sergeant Killenan said darkly, "would you mind checking me out on that handgun?"

"Sure," Fran said. "It's called an automatic revolver, but, strictly speaking, it's a semi-automatic revolver. The mechanism is actuated by the energy of recoil, which drives the whole superstructure—the barrel-cylinder assembly, rearward. Like this."

She was holding the superstructure in one hand and the grip in the other, but when she tried to work the action, nothing happened.

"Damn lousy lube job," she said disgustedly. "Here, Toku. You do it."

Lieutenant Tokuwara took the gun. "You see, Sergeant, the whole upper part of the weapon slides back, like—uh—this. When the cartridge is fired, the whole mechanism is sent

rearward by the recoil, recocking the hammer. That compresses the recoil spring, which forces the whole assembly forward again to the firing position." He handed the cocked weapon back to Fran Dixon.

"It's a beautiful engineering job," she said, "but a flat failure as a combat weapon. Too complicated. This zig-zag groove around the cylinder is actuated by this stud down here on the grip assembly to rotate the cylinder to the next cartridge. See?" She gave the gun to Killenan.

"I never heard of a gun like this," Killenan said, looking at it.

"That's the four fifty-five," Fran said. "I understand the Webley-Fosbery was also made in thirty-eight caliber, but I've never seen one. The only other handgun I know of that's anything like it is a thirty-two with a nearly identical mechanism, made by the Union Fire Arms Company in Toledo, Ohio."

Killenan worked the action of the weapon a couple of times, shoving the heavy carriage back and letting it snap forward. Then he looked at Fran Dixon.

"Makes me feel kind of silly, Lieutenant," he told her, "Looks like Broadhurst

could've killed himself after all."

Before Fran could answer, one of the technicians came out of the death room and said: "Lieutenant Tōkuwara, look what we found under the mattress in there." He held out a small plastic bag half filled with a white crystalline powder.

Tokuwara didn't take it.
"Is it?" he asked.

Sergeant Killenan took the tiny bag, opened it, touched the powder with his finger and transferred a few grains to the tip of his tongue.

"Yup," he said after a second. "Heroin. Damn high grade stuff, too."

"Take it to the lab," Tokuwara told the technician.

"Sergeant Killenan," Fran said, "you and your squad have a job to do." She gave full instructions. Then, when Killenan had gone, she said to Tokuwara: "All right, Toku, we'll split 'em up. You take the old lady; Sergeant Curtis will take the girl; I will take Postman. Three different rooms. We talk and we wait. Okay?"

"Damn it, Fran," Tokuwara said, "I'm not up on interrogation; I'm a lab man. I don't—"

Fran Dixon cut him off. "You went through basic training, didn't you? That's all you need." Her voice became

urgent. "Don't you see, Toku? I'm not asking that any of us get any real information from those three; all we're doing is stalling for time. All you have to do is go in there and sound like a cop for a while. Is that too damn difficult?"

Tokuwara paused for a moment. Then he slit his heavy-lidded eyes and bowed. "As honorabu rady Rootenant command, so humber servant wirr do."

Lieutenant Fran Dixon half closed her caramel eyes and bowed in return. "Sank you, honorabu Rootenant Tokuwara. Now rets get honorabu asses in gear and go to work. Orright?"

"Orright, Rootenant-san."

"Sank you, Rootenant-san."

The three investigators spent an hour and twelve minutes interrogating the three suspects, learning nothing that had any real bearing on the case. Tokuwara did his best with the old lady, but he was handicapped by not having interrogated a subject for years, and because he felt impelled to be polite to a frail and rather sweet elderly woman.

In another room, Sergeant Curtis was bearing down hard on little Louise, and wasn't enjoying it because she had a tendency to burst into tears ever so often. Fran Dixon was



having it a little easier because Larry Postman had lost his truculence and was apparently earnestly trying to co-operate with her.

"I keep telling you, lady," he was saying tiredly, "I was in the bathroom at the time. It took me a little while to get up. Know what I mean?"

There was a rap at the door, and the uniformed cop who was witnessing the interrogation opened it. Sergeant Killenan came in, his hands behind his back and a satisfied look on his face.

"I found the abditory, Lieutenant," he said.

Fran Dixon blinked. She knew that rare word for "hiding

place", but she wondered where Killenan had learned it.

She looked back at Larry Postman, seated opposite her.

"Well, dumbo," she said in her bitchiest voice, "it looks like we not only have you for premeditated murder, but for pushing heroin. I don't know which is worse. We found your stash."

Postman's eyes widened in panic for half a second, then narrowed. "Whadda ya mean, my stash? That stuff was in Broadhurst's room."

"In Broadhurst's room?" her voice was biting.

"Yeah; sure. Under his mattress."

"How did you know it was there? Nobody told you where we found it."

Postman looked suddenly confused. "Well, I knew. I mean, like he told me. He used the stuff. He was mainlining."

"Sure he was," Fran said. "Without making needle tracks? Not even a sterile puncture?" She glanced at Killenan. "Did you check the arms under that long-sleeved shirt of dumbo, here?"

"First thing," Killenan said. "Looks like a cow pasture after a heavy rain."

"It figures," Fran said. "What about the abditory?"

Killenan's hand came out from behind his back. He was

holding a long black cylinder with knobs on both ends.

"Typewriter platen," he said unnecessarily. "It was in his typewriter, trying to look innocent. One of the ends unscrews, and the stuff is in the hollow of the cylinder. Even if it's been cut, there's a couple of grand worth of junk in it."

"Fingerprints?" Fran Dixon asked.

"None but his."

"How about the girl, Louise?"

"Sergeant Curtis says she admits seeing him come out of that room immediately after the shot was fired," Killenan said.

Suddenly, unexpectedly, Larry Postman came up out of his chair. One big fist slammed into Killenan's chest, knocking him backward into the uniformed Officer Cardona, who was standing behind him. Both men went down like a pair of dominoes. Postman came straight for Fran, hands outstretched.

His own momentum defeated him. Fran's right hand, knuckles folded, jammed into Postman's solar plexus, doubling him up. Fran's chair began to topple backward, but she was up and out of it, on balance, before it hit the floor. Her left hand chopped edgewise at the back of Postman's neck,

and he toppled, unconscious, to join the chair on the floor.

"Hold it!" Her voice snapped out at the two men on the floor near the door. Both Killenan and Cardona had drawn their sidearms, but they froze at the sound of Lieutenant Dixon's order.

"No need to shoot," she said quietly. "Cardona. Handcuff this slob and get him the hell out of here."

Five minutes later, Fran Dixon, Tokuwara, Curtis, and Killenan were standing in the hall.

"I don't get it, Lieutenant," Killenan said. "How did you know the stuff would be in Postman's room?"

"Because that Webley-Fosbery was recocked," Fran said.

Killenan closed his eyes. "Goddam it, Lieutenant, you just showed me how it could've been recocked. How come it couldn't have been suicide?"

Fran looked at Tokuwara. "You saw how hard it was to work the action on that Webley-Fosbery?"

Tokuwara took his cigar out of his mouth. "Yeah. So? I must admit I don't follow you, Fran."

"It couldn't have been

suicide," Fran said firmly. "You know how those Webley-Fosberys work. If the grip isn't held firmly—and I mean *firmly*—the recoil throws it up and back. If that happens, the grip follows the action, and the gun doesn't recock itself. There is no way a freshly dead man could hold a weapon that firmly, so Broadhurst wasn't holding it."

"Who was? Little Louise? That chickie would be lucky if she could hold a .22 short Beretta steady. So would the old lady, not with those arthritic hands. Elimination leaves Larry Postman."

"Motive?" Lieutenant Tokuwara asked softly.

"I'd bet that Broadhurst finked to the Narcotics Squad," Fran said. "So Postman killed him and planted a little bit of heroin in his bedroom. That was supposed to throw us off the track. It was a singularly stupid crime, if you'll stop and think about it."

After a moment, Lieutenant Tokuwara bowed and said: "Verry crever, Rootenant Dixon-san."

Lieutenant Dixon bowed back. "Sank you, Rootenant Tokuwara-san."

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THE THEFT OF THE CRYSTAL CROWN

It was a simple enough job. All I had to do was outwit twelve guards, steal a royal crown—and get myself killed in the process!

By EDWARD D. HOCH

NICK VELVET was a thief, but the mere fact of his profession did little to explain him. He was a man first of all who liked the quiet life, the beer on the front porch with Gloria at his side and a sort of eternal summer evening in the air. Perhaps he'd been born a generation too late, unfit for the bustle of the Sixties. Perhaps that was why he took a special interest in the crystal crown affair.

"We understand you will steal anything," the man with the monocle said. His name was Vonderberg, and he too was of another generation.

"Anything but money," Nick Velvet replied. "My price is twenty thousand dollars, plus expenses. Thirty thousand for especially dangerous jobs."

"This is not dangerous, but

my people are prepared to pay you thirty thousand."

"Nice of you," Nick Velvet agreed.

"Are you familiar with the country of New Ionia? We are a very old and very small island in the Mediterranean, between the southern tips of Italy and Greece. We are a constitutional monarchy, with a ruling family that is centuries old and very, very tired."

Velvet decided that *very* was Vonderberg's favorite word.

"What is it you want stolen?" Velvet asked. His clients didn't get billed for conference time, and he liked to keep it short.

"There is a crown, a very old relic of the days when the kingdom of New Ionia had little use for written constitutions. It is made of glass—a crystal crown

NICK VELVET



that is displayed to the people once a year at the grand masked ball."

"Valuable?"

The monocled man shrugged. "Inferior workmanship, like much of New Ionia. It might bring a few hundred dollars somewhere. But its value as a symbol is utterly incalculable. We are a very old people, as I have said. We believe in the nature of symbols. A pretender to the throne, armed with the crystal crown, would have half the country behind him. They believe it is destined always to go with the true ruler, somewhat like King Arthur's sword in that stone."

Nick Velvet grunted. "I never thought much of fairy tales. So you want the crown stolen. What's so tough about that?"

"The king's personal guard is on hand during the masked ball. If a thief could somehow get into the ballroom, he certainly could never get out alive, especially not while carrying a fragile glass crown."

Nick Velvet smiled. "There's always a way. When is the blasted ball?"

"Next Monday evening, six days from now."

"It's a nice time of year for a Mediterranean vacation," Nick Velvet decided.

New Ionia was a tiny spot of land fifty miles long and half as

wide, stretched beneath the Roman sun as if awaiting a long-delayed visit from some far-off gods. It was May on New Ionia, and it might have been a season unique in the world. When Nick Velvet first stepped off the little ferry from Corfu, he looked up at the smooth blue of the sky and decided that surely it could never be dotted by clouds. New Ionia was a place unique, and perhaps the gods would never come because they were already here.

The city of New Ionia stretched along the southern coast of the island. It was a fair-sized place by any standards, with thirty thousand residents and one building five stories high. But while strolling through streets too narrow and shops too old, Nick Velvet wondered why anyone would really want to be king of it. New Ionia was a great place to visit, but he'd hate to rule it.

The monocled Vonderberg had instructed him to contact a Miss Vera Smith-Blue, since his first and most important task was gaining admittance to the annual ball.

Nick Velvet found Miss Smith-Blue in a little gabled office of what must have corresponded to an American Chamber of Commerce.

She was younger than he'd expected, and might even have

been pretty without the glasses and severe hair style.

"My name is Velvet," he admitted quite openly. "I'm something of a writer, and I'm most interested in your annual ball."

"Oh?" She gave him a smile she must have reserved for visiting foreign writers. "Is this your first journey to New Ionia?"

"The first of many, I hope. It's a beautiful island. But you must be British. Aren't you?"

"By birth, but this is my home now. I firmly believe this to be the tourist haven of tomorrow. Each summer attracts more and more visitors. Soon we will be as popular and exclusive as Corfu. We only need a king or a cinema star to summer here."

She'd taken off her glasses, and Nick Velvet ran appreciative eyes over the smooth lines of her face and figure. She wore a sort of tunic dress, pulled just a bit too tightly over firm breasts.

"About the ball, Miss Smith-Blue. What could you tell me?"

"Well, it's the social event of the year on New Ionia. Upwards of a thousand people attend. It's held in the grand ballroom of the summer palace, which is the only palace any more. Everyone's in costume, of course, and the crown is displayed."

"Yes, I've heard about this crown," Nick Velvet settled back

in his chair and lit a cigarette. "What can you tell me about it?" he asked.

"Here's a pamphlet that tells the entire history. But if you want it briefly, it dates back to a Greek-Italian family who lived on the island in the seventeenth century. They had a Venetian glassblower form the crown, and presented it to the royal family. Of course it couldn't be worn, but it was displayed once a year at the ball. It's symbolic, I suppose. The people almost worship it. During the war, the Nazi invaders confiscated it as a sign of their authority, and as long as they held it, the people obeyed them. It was a most amazing thing."

"Would it be possible for me to see the ballroom?"

"Sure. Why not?" She gathered a bunch of keys from one of her desk drawers.

The summer palace stood behind a high stone wall just on the outskirts of the city. At a quick glance it might have seemed something left over from a Hollywood movie of the Thirties, but as they left Miss Smith-Blue's car and approached the gate, he could see the little touches of modern living. The iron gates swung open electricaly at a touch from the uniformed guard, and Velvet was quickly aware of the waiting spotlights on the turreted roof.

"Who lives here?" he asked the girl.

"We are ruled by Prince Baudlay. He is abroad much of the time, but this is his home when he is here."

"Will he be at the ball?"

"Of course."

She led him through a maze of passages and into a final great room that reminded him of a mammoth high school gymnasium. There were even rows of seats along one side, for resting between dances. The place was oddly plain, but already workmen were appearing with ladders and hammers.

"So this is it."

She smiled at the flatness of his tone. "You won't even recognize it by next Monday."

Nick Velvet took out a cigarette. "I heard someone speak of a king, but you only mentioned Prince Baudlay."

She brushed a hand through the texture of her hair, loosening it a bit. "King Felix is the prince's father. He is an old man, and very ill. No one ever sees him any more. He is confined to a hospital in Athens."

"I see." Velvet had walked up to the little stage that overlooked the empty dance floor, and now he stood upon it, visualizing the room as it would look with a thousand costumed revelers crowded into it. "And I suppose the crown is up here."

"That's right," she said.

"Do they guard it well?"

"Who'd want to steal it?" She seemed truly puzzled by the idea.

"I hear the Germans did once, during the war." Velvet smiled down at her. "That's what you told me, anyway."

"That was different. So many things were different, during the war."

"You could hardly be old enough to remember."

"I was a child in London," she said, breaking the contact with his eyes. "During the blitz."

Nick Velvet jumped down from the platform. "Could you get me an invitation to the ball?"

"You really want to come?"

"I'd like to see it; for my article on New Ionia."

"Just where is this article going to appear?"

"One of the big American travel magazines. It'll be great publicity."

She smiled then. "You may escort me if you'd like. I have two tickets."

"It would be an honor," Nick Velvet said, returning her smile.

On Sunday evening, Nick Velvet met with Vonderberg at a little waterfront cafe near the place where the Corfu ferry docked twice a day. For some reason, the monocled man seemed much more at home here than he had during their first



meeting in New York. It shouldn't have been strange, but it was. Perhaps until now, Nick Velvet had not really believed him to be a part of the tourist business and the aging monarch and the rest of this strange little island.

"Are you ready?" Vonderberg asked.

"As ready as I'll ever be. Where shall I meet you?"

He considered the question carefully. "The last ferry leaves at ten for Corfu. That wouldn't give you enough time, would it?"

Nick Velvet shook his head. "It'll be almost ten when we arrive at the ball."

"All right, then. I can't risk being on the island when the robbery takes place. I'll come over on the Tuesday noon boat

from Corfu, and I'll remain on the ferry. They can't touch me there. You bring the crown on board for me."

Nick Velvet smiled. "You mean I have to keep it till Tuesday noon?"

"That's what you're being paid for."

"Just who is paying me?"

Vonderberg grunted. "That doesn't matter. Let's just say the next king of New Ionia. I'll be waiting for you Tuesday noon with the money."

"All right."

Nick Velvet left him and walked back to the hotel. The island kingdom was still the vacation paradise he'd first seen, but now, after a few days, some of the gloss was wearing off. He noticed a beggar in a doorway, and perhaps a prostitute beneath a run-down bar's neon glow. New Ionia was only the world, and he wondered why anyone would want to be its king.

NICK VELVET spent the early hours of the following evening preparing his costume, and when he called for Vera Smith-Blue in a rented car he was wearing the bright baggy overalls of a circus clown. It covered him from wrists and neck to ankles, and he'd taken some time carefully painting his face into a grotesquely grinning contour of clownish delight.

Vera Smith-Blue gasped as she opened the door, then relaxed into a smile. "That's very realistic, Mr. Velvet. I didn't recognize you at first."

"Thanks. I figured I should go all out."

Vera herself was wearing a somewhat standard ballet costume, which allowed her to show off the firmness of her well-shaped legs while remaining reasonably decent. On her face she wore a tiny domino mask that did nothing to conceal her identity.

"I'm almost ready," she told him. "Come in."

"You have dancer's legs," he commented admiringly.

"I went in for ballet a bit at school. But that was a long time ago." She fluffed out her brief skirt as she spoke. Then she ran a comb through her hair and sprinkled a bit of sparkling stuff in it. "There! Shall we be going now? They always expect me to be among the first arrivals. I have certain duties."

When they reached the summer palace it was a blaze of lights, a different world from the empty shell he remembered from his first visit. The walls and the gate were patrolled by uniformed royal guards, and colored footmen opened doors as each car rolled up to discharge its passengers.

The hilarity of the evening

was already beginning as each arriving group added to the melange of knights and angels, warriors and wantons. Nick Velvet saw a near-naked nymph in the grip of a bearded pirate, but for the most part the females were modestly costumed, perhaps in deference to the presence of Prince Baudlay.

The prince himself made his appearance shortly before ten, interrupting the dancing and drinking with a heralding blast of trumpets. He wore a princely sort of jerkin, which for all Nick Velvet knew might have been his daily costume in the kingdom of New Ionia. He took his place on a sort of raised throne, and almost immediately four attendants appeared carrying the glass domed case which housed the crystal crown.

There was a murmur soft as a whisper as the crown appeared, and then near silence. Nick Velvet and Vera Smith-Blue were near the platform, so he had a good view of it—a coronet of glassy spikes resting on a velvet pillow. It looked as if it would break at the slightest touch.

"Do they have an unmasking at midnight?" Nick Velvet asked, spinning Vera off into the intricacies of a Mediterranean folk dance. "Like in the fairy tales?"

"Of course!"

"I think the whole thing is a

publicity gimmick," he said. "New Ionia can't be for real."

"Does it matter?" she whispered, so close that he felt her smudge his makeup.

Just after eleven, when they were seated with a group of Vera's friends, Nick Velvet excused himself and went off to the men's room. He knew he had to be fast. He was allowing himself only five minutes for the entire operation.

Before the door had fully closed behind him, he was unzipping the clown's costume and stepping out of it. Beneath it, he wore a tight-fitting devil's suit in vivid red, complete with a tail that had fitted down the pants-leg of the clown outfit. From a pouch secured under his left arm he withdrew a rubber devil's mask that fitted over his entire head, red gloves and a small pistol.

He slipped the mask over his head, careful to smudge the clown makeup no more than necessary. Then he slid a silencer onto the gun barrel. He didn't really need it, but it made the small weapon seem bulkier. He opened the window and stuffed the clown suit into the waste basket next to it. The whole operation had taken just under two minutes.

Then he was out of the room and up the stairs. He came out near the raised platform and was

onto it before anyone even noticed. Prince Baudlay turned in his seat to smile, and Nick Velvet brought the gun up from his thigh.

"Stay right there," he said.

A woman nearby screamed, but no one else seemed to notice. He swung the pistol against the protective glass bell and felt it crack. Another blow and it shattered perfectly around the crystal crown.

Prince Baudlay was out of his chair now, hurling himself at Nick Velvet. He grabbed onto a red-clad leg and the tail, but Velvet brushed him away with a glancing blow from the barrel of the gun. The others had seen it now, and a growing wave of panic swept backward through the throng of dancers. Somebody pushed a button, and the wail of a siren added to the screams.

But Nick Velvet had the crown in his hand. He dove for a window, hoping it was the right one. Someone grabbed again at his costume, and he felt the tail rip away. But he was free and through the window. He hit the ground on the run, still clutching the glass crown in his left hand.

There was just one guard, too near to outrun. Nick Velvet shot him in the fleshy part of the leg.

Then he was around the corner and back through the basement window of the men's room. This was the dangerous

part, and if there had been someone else in there, he would have had to use the gun again. But he'd guessed correctly that the screams from the upper floor had brought everyone running. In an instant he had the clown suit out of the basket and was zipping it up.

The mask and gun and gloves went into the tank of one of the toilets, with the crystal crown placed gently within the protective rubber devil's face. He closed the window, touched up his makeup, and headed upstairs. His body could now pass a hand frisking, and he doubted if the police would have reason to go about unzipping costumes. He glanced at his watch—six minutes and twenty seconds. A bit longer than he'd planned, but he was satisfied.

In the ballroom all was bedlam, and no one had noticed his absence. He told Vera he'd been almost back to her when the thief appeared, and she had no reason to doubt him. Women were still fainting from the near-panic of the crush, and from outside came the chatter of occasional gunfire. Nick Velvet smiled and hugged Vera protectively.

Almost immediately, the island kingdom had become a fortress. American-made jeeps crisscrossed the highways, with grim-faced men seated at the

ready behind fifty-caliber machine guns. Nick Velvet dropped Vera Smith-Blue at her place, and then drove to his own room to change into his street clothes. There was still the problem of transporting the crown from the summer palace to the Corfu ferry, and he was beginning to think it would not be an easy job.

He waited till daybreak to drive back to the palace, wanting the crown in his possession no longer than necessary. The police and government guards still seemed at a complete loss to explain the vanished thief, but their search had not yet turned inward toward the palace itself.

The man in the devil suit had been seen to leave, had actually wounded a guard, so there was no reason to suspect that he had returned. Two innocent guests in devil costumes had been questioned through the night, but finally released. Both had been in plain sight of witnesses during the holdup.

Continuing his pose as a reporter and writer, Nick Velvet talked to several of the guards and inspected the ballroom once more. One guard accompanied him at all times, but it was not difficult to stop in the men's room on the way out. He left the mask and gun and gloves where they were, but the crystal crown went out on his head, resting



lightly beneath the soft felt of his hat.

AT FIVE minutes to noon, Nick Velvet stood on the dock watching the ferry from Corfu drift slowly but accurately into its slip. He still felt the weight of the crown beneath his hat, but now the tension was gone. In a few more minutes the thing would be delivered and he would be out of New Ionia for good. He'd decided that princes and masked balls and fairy tales were not for him.

"Stop him!" somebody shouted. He turned and saw two army trucks pulling up at the end of the dock. Soldiers, and police—

and Vera Smith-Blue was with them!

Nick Velvet watched the ferry drawing closer. Ten feet, nine, eight. He could wait only a second longer. Gripping the crown and his hat, he ran a few paces and launched himself at the narrowing gap. He made the ramp of the ferry boat with a foot to spare, and kept going. People stared and someone shouted, but he didn't look back.

"Velvet!" It was Vonderberg, waiting in the shadow of a stairway.

"All right," Nick told him. "Here it is."

"And you've brought the entire New Ionian army with you!"

"You said we'd be safe on the boat," Nick Velvet said.

The girl and the police had paused at the ramp, and there was much conversation taking place. Finally the ferry's captain waved his arms in despair, and the pursuers came aboard.

"That one," Vera said, pointing. "His name is Nick Velvet. And the one with the monocle is Vonderberg."

"You are on Greek territory," Vonderberg said, holding the crown Nick had given him.

"We have Greek officials with us," Vera Smith-Blue said firmly. "This is no longer a New Ionian matter. Our king was assassinated in an Athens hospital this

morning. Two Communist agents have been arrested."

It was then that Vonderberg moved, when he realized that the ferry was no haven for him after all. He put down the crown and stepped back, revealing a gun as if by magic.

"Stay there, all of you!" he shouted.

"You can't kill us all," a uniformed guard said, moving closer.

"No, but Miss Smith-Blue will get my first bullet."

There were a number of things Nick Velvet could have done. He considered three of them in the instant before he acted.

Then he scooped up the crystal crown and hurled it at Vonderberg's face.

The monocled man fired as the crown shattered against him, but his shot was wild. Two officers brought their guns up before he could aim again, and Vonderberg toppled backward as the bullets staggered him like unseen fists.

"That one too!" an officer shouted, pointing his gun at Nick Velvet.

Velvet smiled and put up his hands. "Miss Smith-Blue, I just saved your life. Won't you return the favor?"

She walked up to him, waving away the guns. Someone had gone to tend to Vonderberg, but

his blood was spreading too fast over the ferry's deck.

"Yes," she answered, "I'll save your life—so you can rot in a New Ionian jail for the next twenty years."

"I don't think so." He dropped his voice so only she could hear. "You're going to get me out of this, lady, or I'll tell them all it was you who paid to have the crown stolen. And you must know very well I can prove it, too."

Vera Smith-Blue's face had gone white with his words, and that was all the assurance he needed that his guess was correct. He led her a bit away from the watching men, and offered her a cigarette.

"Did Vonderberg tell you?" she asked.

"I could say that he did, but it was really mostly a guess. You knew where to find me this morning, and you knew I was the thief. You also knew Vonderberg's name. That got me to thinking just now. I remembered thinking the whole thing was a publicity stunt, and I was right. You thought it would be a great idea, didn't you? The theft of a crystal crown during a masked ball at the New Ionian summer palace. It would have made every paper in the world, and would have brought tourists flocking, just to see what this place was all about."

"It still will bring them flocking," she said.

"I suppose it will. I thought you were awfully cooperative about showing me the palace, and getting me an invitation. Of course that's why Vondenberg told me to contact you, so you could help ease the way for me. Was the prince in on it, too?"

"Of course not! It was all my idea. I own property here. The island means something to me."

"But you made the mistake of hiring a Communist named Vonderberg to arrange matters. He had other ideas. New Ionia would make a nice Red base off Greece, and if King Felix were assassinated when the crown was stolen, a real pretender to the throne could appear after all."

"I never thought he'd do a thing like that. I had no idea he was in with the Reds! But when I heard of the assassination this morning, I realized what a fool I'd been, playing into their hands."

She met his eyes. "I thought you were one, too."

"No," he answered. "Only a simple thief."

"What do you want, to keep silent?"

"My freedom. And the money Vonderberg promised me. I imagine it's in his pocket."

"And if I say no? Would anyone believe you now that Vonderberg's dead?"

"I think so. You showed no emotion just now when the crown was smashed. You say that Prince Baudlay knew nothing of the plot, but I'll bet if someone examined that glass they'd find it of recent make. You wouldn't take a chance on the real crown being damaged in the robbery. You'd have arranged for the substitution of a false one. So somebody in the palace knew about it."

"You guess very well, Nick Velvet."

"It helps me stay alive. I'm no detective, only a good guesser when I have to be."

She turned away, sighed, and then turned back.

"Take this ferry back to Corfu," she told him finally. "I'll see that you aren't bothered."

"And the money?"

"You devil."

"Exactly," he said, and waited while she got the envelope from the dead man's pocket.

"Come back some time. As a tourist."

Nick Velvet smiled at her and turned away, looking off across the sea toward Corfu. "I don't think I could afford the rates."

The ONLY MAGAZINE featuring MIKE SHAYNE every month

The Last Payoff

by JIM DUKE



THE SIGN painted on the side said it was fireproof. That was too bad. Forty years ago Carpenter was a big railroad town for the melon farmers; then came the trucking revolution and down went the dry, dusty town in the lower California desert.

The Dunpair Hotel shared a lot with the town: they were both havens for derelicts.

The bald-headed, pot-bellied guy at the main desk in the big empty hotel lobby eyed me sleepily when I came in out of the June Desert heat.

"Ed Glass," I said.

Leaning back in his swivel, he glanced at the key slots.

"Two-oh-seven," he said.

One look at the cage elevator and I decided to use the stairs:

I rapped five times on the door.

"Pick a number," said the voice. A silly code, but it was Ed's voice, thin, a lot weaker, but it shot me with memories.

"Thirty-one," I said.

When Ed opened the door I knew what death looked like. Red eyes hid in dark hollows of a sallow, drawn face with stained islands all over. He gave me a bony hand, but he still had a hard handshake.

"You old S.O.B., Jason," he said, closing the door quickly, locking it and aiming me at a beat-up table with a pair of chairs. Away from the window.

I pulled out the envelope and tossed it on the table.

"Got your message," I said.

He was a baddo, a good man gone wrong, which is the worst kind of all. But he had been my pal and now he was dead and I had a debt to pay him. "Give me the dough," I said. "Or you get a .38 where your heart was."



"Money talks, don't it, Jason?"

"Five grand does, which I don't need from an old friend. And which doesn't explain this dump."

Ed folded the money away, tried to grin, but his face wouldn't let him. It was barely the face of a man I'd been a partner with ten years ago. The partnership was dissolved when the state took away his private investigator's license after a solo blackmail scheme of his fell through.

I figured him dead, since I hadn't heard from him. Not until the letter with the money the day before came to my L.A. office. He had backed me up in more than one scrape before, and I owed it to him.

"Your note said you're in a corner," I said.

"I'm a dead man, Jason," he said.

I didn't say anything.

"You gotta help me. I've done a dumb thing, *amigo*. A real number one dumb thing and I'm fingered. I'm scared even to leave this hole."

"And you can't call for a cop," I said.

"Sure, if I want to buy time at Folsom."

"Better than no time, Ed."

"Says you. Walls and me, Jason."

I tossed a glance around the

small, neat room and Ed knew what I was thinking.

His big-knuckled fingers went out and touched my hand.

"You're my only hope, *amigo*."

It was a dry little laugh. "Me, sharp as a tack, huh? Yeah, trying to buck the Mexican Mafia."

"Great," I said. "What were you, a bag man for them?"

He nodded. His body began to shake with the left-over booze in him. "Fifty grand, Jason. Simple delivery to a guy in Mexicali. Hernandez. Middle man in the Mexican syndicate. Six months I've been carrying payoffs between there and L.A. But fifty grand..."

He took on that far away look of a sot with dreams.

"You stupid bastard," I said harshly.

I'd had more than one bump with Mafia, Mexican style. It was a popular reference to a loosely knit bunch of Latin narcotic dealers. They handled their own police by gunning them down, in between payoffs. They were right out of the Chicago-style of the 30's.

"Been shot at twice," he said. "Tried to get the money back. But the vine says they'll get the money and me, too."

"You want me to arbitrate," I said.

"You gotta, Jason. It's my only card. Set up the return of

the money to Hernandez. Tell him to call off the muscle."

I looked at my hands and felt tired. Seeing Ed Glass brought back the years, the good times. He and I cutting red tape, making good cases; then his hang-up with the bottle, the broads, the long slide. Blackmail. Now this. A cheap carrier, bag man. I wanted to walk out, leave him with the cards he'd given himself, but I came down knowing it wouldn't be pretty and knowing I owed him.

"Okay," I said. "I'll do what I can to call off the dogs. The money, I take it, is well-hidden?"

"Yeah."

I was at the door when he stopped me. "If you shake 'em off, Jason, I'm cutting out, cutting clean."

I knew he was lying, if not to me, at least to himself.

Fifteen miles south I crossed the border at Calexico and was in Mexicali. It's a border city with more respectability than Tijuana and about as big as San Diego.

It was late afternoon when I made a first contact in Charro's, a handsome restaurant-bar with mariachis in black and silver suits. Charro's famed for its meat barritos, but I wasn't eating. I had to go through three slick Italian-dressed Mexicans, a cab drive and two blocks of walking before I would up at a red brick,

two-story house surrounded by a ten-foot adobe wall.

Bennie Hernandez, dark, heavy, looking at peace with the world, was on the back patio beside the big pool.

"Jason Varney, an L.A. private detective," he said in fine English, and showing me his info system was quick.

Beside him sat a beautiful, long-haired Mexican girl, maybe eighteen, her pointed breasts making her red sweater work for its keep.

"Fifty grand and Eddie Glass," I said.

Hernandez sipped a Margarita and smiled pleasantly. "You're a friend, of course."

"He's had it," I said. "Call off the dogs."

"Really?"

"Set the place, the time. I return the money."

"He's set a bad *precedente*, Mr. Varney. A carrier that does this can give others bad ideas."

"Frankly, I don't give a damn what you do to him," I said. "After I give him a break. He's an old friend and from me he deserves a break. I intend to give it to him."

"That is very dangerous loyalty, Mr. Varney."

"Like you, I'm stuck with certain codes."

"And if I should reject this—"

"Then you won't be dealing with a boozed-up has-been,

señor. I'm very good at what I do."

Hernandez did not lose his amiable expression, but behind the eyes I knew he was evaluating me. I was betting his little info system was not only quick but went deep and he'd know my background.

"You know *La Bola?*"

"Yeah. A bar a block from the border."

"Tomorrow. Eleven o'clock in the morning."

I stood up.

"And I make no promises, afterward, *señor.*"

I went out the gate feeling the kind of nausea inside that comes with that kind of bargain. But I knew it was the best I could hope for: a little time to get Ed away from the border. The odds were pretty good he'd drift back, but that would have to be his decision.

I stopped at *La Bola*, had a Mexicali beer and checked out the place. It was dark, full of noise and smelled faintly of tortillas from the cafe next door, but it was okay for an exchange.

When I got back to Carpenter I found a motel, had a bite to eat in one of those brightly lit truck stops on the highway running through town and went to see Ed.

I figured to lay it out for him very simply. There was no reason to hide Hernandez's hedged

guarantee. If Ed didn't want to buy it, then I had done as much as I could.

My rapping on his door got no answer. I went down and woke up the desk clerk.

"He ought to be up there," he mumbled as he walked up the stairs in front of me. "Probably in a drunk sleep."

When he unlocked the door I flipped the lights and Ed Glass was using a table leg for a pillow. The lamp cord was knotted around his thin neck.

"Damn," the big man beside me whispered.

He started to loosen the cord.

"Leave it," I said. "He's dead and the cops like pictures the way it is."

"Yeah, yeah, I guess so."

When he was gone to call the local police, I made a quick check around the room. In the closet I found a loose wall board and behind it an empty hole where I knew the money had been.

I sat on the bed and looked at my old friend. Even if he was a drunk, he was no slob. The room was neat, if maybe heavy with that whiskey smell. It angered me to think Hernandez hadn't called off his dogs in time—if he ever intended to. Now I thought about my promise to him. It would've been easy to leave and forget the whole stupid mess.

But I had a stubborn streak.

Lieutenant Henderson, a bland, thin man, questioned me and seemed bored by it.

"Glass was a bum," he said, puffing on a black pipe, watching his I.D. man take his pictures. "You say he was an old friend?"

"Yeah," I said.

He shook his head. "Well, the hotel owner, Tony, says three Mexicans came in a couple of hours ago."

"He recognize them?"

"Nobody local."

"That's interesting," I said.

"You know what this is about?"

"Nope," I said.

He didn't believe me but didn't much care. He shrugged, puffed his pipe and nodded for me to go. Outside in the cooling night I hoped it would go away, that nasty feeling I get when I'm caught with my words hanging. "—you won't be dealing with a boozed-up has-been."

Nice speech, I thought. Full of dramatics. A speech to get drunk over, or maybe killed over.

Sleep didn't come easy and the next morning my breakfast of over-easy eggs turned hard by a sloppy cook in the truck stop didn't help my disposition.

It was a few minutes before eleven when I found a table in *La Bola*. A Scotch and water flushed away some of the bad egg taste. But nothing got rid of Ed Glass' body lying in that fleabag hotel.



The Mexican in the tight green suit came in, looked around and walked over to me. He had a handsome scar starting just below his earlobe and angling south. No doubt the other guy had been the loser.

"*Donde esta?*" he asked.

"Don't give me that," I said.

"*Que?*"

"English," I said. "And the 'what' of it is the money, meathead."

He stood there, rooster-like, tight-suited and hating my existence, and I didn't much give a damn. He wasn't going to make a play there; I half-wished he would have.

"You do not have the money?"

"Ask your boss," I said.

Without another word he left.

I had two more Scotch and waters, getting a glow and feeling like a mean bastard when Hernandez, flanked by a pair of mustachioed bodyguards, strolled in. His face was all amiability and his teeth were pearls and I thought about my fist planted there.

"I told you," I said when he sat down.

"What, Mr. Varney?"

"I got to give it to you. You play it out. Your boys garroted him, took the money." I shook my head. "Bad news, *señor*."

For the first time his face was not so cheerful. His eyes narrowed. "You're saying he is dead and the money is gone?"

"Tell me you don't know."

"A joke, *verdad*?"

I didn't smile.

"I know nothing of this. My men act only on my orders."

"Three didn't, then," I told him.

"*Tres hombres?* For one drunk?" He laughed sharply. "That is a joke." Then his lips drew tight. It seemed to draw the rest of his face skin like a drum top. "You are not trying a double-cross, are you, Mr. Varney?"

"Sure," I said. "I'm sitting here passing the time of day instead of legging for L.A. with fifty grand."

"An interesting bluff, though?"

"And very dumb."

"Yes. But, then, neither of us are very dumb."

I sipped my drink. Hernandez's two henchmen were itching to move in.

"We still have a partial deal, *señor*," Hernandez said. "My men did not kill your friend. And you owe me fifty thousand dollars."

Hernandez walked out and at the doorway his two boys looked back at me and I waited for the move. There was none.

I felt a whole hell of a lot better when I got back across the border. But there's no one-hundred percent in these deals.

Driving back to Carpenter, I thought about a lot of bad money and I wondered about my own motives. Getting fifty grand back meant sending a hell of a lot of pot or smack right into the supply-demand racket. I hated the lousy racket, but here I was in the middle of it. And all for a friend. A dead friend, now.

If nothing else, Carpenter had the bars. I knew Ed would have a reputation in them. I began making the tour, watering my drinks and running through joints like the Green Room and the Happening.

I kept getting the name Dottie.

In a place called the Sage-

brush, a piece of stucco near the railroad tracks, I found a talky bartender.

"Dottie and Eddie were in and out, sure. A real piece, that girl. Don't know what she saw in the souse, though."

"Where do I find her?"

"Sam's Siding, last I heard. She held down a barmaid job. She was just waiting for Eddie to take her away from Carpenter. Always talking about Hollywood." He shook his head. "Pretty girl, but not that pretty."

Sam's Siding was a converted railroad club car, now a bar, and the "conductor", Sam Lark, glared at me when I mentioned Dottie.

"Skipped me! Not a damn word! You find her, you tell her I'll wring her neck. It's only proper she give notice."

"I'll tell her," I said.

I tried the rest of the two-bit joints, the hotels and motels and no Dottie. But I got a picture of a pretty talky girl, booze talk—big dreams, big money. It was a joke, of course, that Eddie Glass was her dream man.

All the touring was a waste of time, of course, because when I walked into my motel room she was sitting on the bed. The small nickel-plated automatic was in her hand aimed at my chest. She was skinny and her hair was bleached nearly white and her

face was beginning to fail her. But she hated me with all her blue eyes.

She didn't take a breath before cracking the whip. "You did it, didn't you!"

Crossing my arms, I propped a foot on the wood chair and leaned against the wall. The .38 under my arm felt a long way off.

"Kinda had you pegged for it," I said. "You and some Mexican friends."

"You're crazy. Ed and me, we were going to L.A."

"Yeah, but you knew he was trying to get the money back, Dottie."

"We had plans." Her thin body began to shake and I was getting very worried about the gun. "Money or no money, we had plans."

"But better with the money."

She shook her head emphatically. "Some friend. He was saying how you'd help him, save him for old times."

"I didn't build his trap."

"Some friend."

She was wiping her eyes when I kicked the chair at her. The slug hit the door and I hit her. She wailed as I yanked the little automatic from her hand and she buried her face in the bed pillow. Grabbing her shoulders, I pulled her upright.

"What'd you do with the money, Dottie?"

"I ain't got it," she cried. "I tell you—"

Pocketing her automatic, I tried to think. This whole mess smelled and I was beginning to feel so badly sucked into it I wondered where the out was. Finally I looked down at the pathetic limp frame of a girl on the bed.

I slammed the chair on its legs and sat down, facing her over the back.

"You've got something in your head I need," I said. "Names, maybe. Something to tie ends up."

"I don't know a damn thing," she said.

"Sure. Where were you last night?"

"Watching the hotel."

"Lookout?"

"For Eddie. Across the street at the phone booth. I was to watch and call him if anybody suspicious came in."

"And?"

"And now he's dead."

She began to blubber again and I grabbed her arm. "Cut out that crap, Dottie. Three Mexicans. Name them."

She looked at me. "What three Mexicans?"

"Went into the hotel."

"Nobody went in. I'd have called."

I sat there a minute while she looked at me like I was crazy. Then I got up, kicked the chair

against the wall and slammed the door when I left.

At the Dupair Hotel I checked the alley entrance. It was a double steel door, bolted tight shut. The fire escape was for coming down, not going up.

Tony, the pot-bellied owner, was behind the counter when I went in the front. His loose face, unaccustomed to warm greetings, wasn't showing me any now.

"You wanna room?" he asked.

"Not in this dump," I said. "Just a couple of answers, Tony."

"About Glass."

"That's it."

"I told the cop all I knew," he said.

I leaned on the counter, my .38 firm under my coat. "Tell me, Tony. Tell me about three Mexicans you saw."

"I told already."

"Front door," I said.

"Sure."

"Walked right in."

"Sure."

I smiled. "I got people saying it never happened. And it doesn't figure, anyway." I stopped, but his blank face told me he wanted me to do the talking.

"Eddie Glass was scared," I went on. "Scared to death. He'd never let three Mexicans in his room. But that locked door says he did, or they had a key, or..."

I was smiling again, and Tony

shifted his weight forward on his swivel.

"Where's the money, Tony? Man with the key, man knowing about wall holes to hide money in."

"Don't know what the hell you're talking about."

I shook my head. "Come on. One phone call to the P.D., explain a few facts, a little theory—a search warrant follows. I wait here, meantime, and watch you squirm cause you can't get to it."

Tony's face had gone flat and I could see his eyes moving, figuring, calculating and hating.

"That's what I thought," I said. "Fifty grand is too much money to hide anywhere but real close. More money than you ever saw, huh, Tony?"

When he moved to the desk drawer, I moved over the counter. I'm a bit overweight, but I can still make it. His old .45 was clearing the wood edge of the drawer when I hit him in the chest with my knee. By the time the gun had hit the floor my fist was mashing Tony's fat nose.

After he wiped the blood away, he glared up at me.

"You bastard," he said hoarsely.

"Where is it?"

"For you to get? Stick it, that's what."

With his .45 in his face, I used

the phone. He sat watching, and I knew the only satisfaction he was getting was knowing I wouldn't get the money.

His eyes got big when I got the Mexicali operator and asked for *La Bola* bar.

"Tell Hernandez," I said to the bartender, "to send some muscle to the Dupair Hotel in Carpenter if he wants the *dinero*."

Naturally the bartender pretended I was nuts—it can be said in a number of ways in Spanish. I hung up, knowing the message would get through pronto.

"Who's this Hernandez?" Tony asked, worried now.

"He figures that fifty grand is his," I said. "And he's the man Eddie Glass was afraid of. But all the time Eddie should've been looking closer, huh, Tony? He should've been looking at a flop hotel owner who smelled money, figured the rumors true and saw a quick way to clear out of this hole."

"Look, Varney, fifty grand splits nice down the middle."

"I've made enough deals," I said.

"Gimme a break, Varney."

"Like you gave Eddie?"

"They'll cut me to pieces. I seen the way they work."

"I figured you had."

The Mexican Mafia had tentacles stateside, so it didn't surprise me when two local

Chicanos walked in—like twins, big and dark and broad shoulder-ed, both wearing heavy sheepskin jackets.

They saw the .45 in my hand and stopped.

"*Usted es Varney?*" asked the slightly bigger of the two. I nodded. "*Este hombre?*" He pointed at Tony and I nodded.

It was the kind of grin he had that you smelled, and Tony got a whiff of it strong. He moved with the quickness panic makes and slammed the door to the little room he slept in behind the counter.

"All yours," I said, waving at the two muscles.

I counted on Tony having another gun, or at least something to cause the Mexicans to use theirs. I walked across the street to the phone booth. When I heard the first shot, a shotgun blast, I called the police like a good citizen.

The morning newspaper said they caught the one Mexican five miles out of town with a briefcase full of money. One was dead in the hotel lobby, a face full of buckshot from Tony's .12 gauge.

Tony took a .38 slug in the chest where the heart was.

Lieutenant Henderson called me at the motel just before I checked out and wanted to know what the hell I knew about the hotel mess.

"Not a thing," I said. "What happened?"

When he hung up he was mumbling something about all the paper work involved in disposing of fifty grand.

I found Dottie camped at the Sagebrush bar. She was leaning heavy on her fifth Tom Collins, lamenting Eddie Glass. I joined her for one and then said:

"I'm going back to L.A. You want to ride?"

"For what?" she said, looking very sad.

"Hernandez didn't get his money. He's going to smell double-cross and maybe send guns to take out a little *venganza* on Eddie's friends in and around the border."

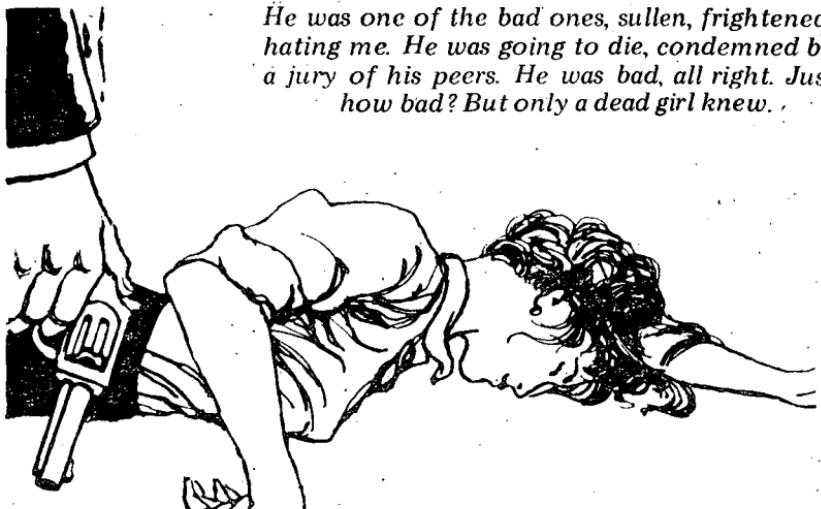
"To hell with it," she said, gazing at her drink. "There's no Eddie."

I was on the highway in the middle of the desert, feeling better as I got farther north, when I thought of the good comeback.

"There's too damn many of them," I should've said.

Coming Soon: Another JIM DUKE Thriller

He was one of the bad ones, sullen, frightened, hating me. He was going to die, condemned by a jury of his peers. He was bad, all right. Just how bad? But only a dead girl knew.



Petition for Justice

by PAULINE C. SMITH

MRS. BRUTON was on duty at the neighborhood liquor store that night, it being the first Wednesday of the month, when Mr. Bruton attended the town council meeting. The block of small business buildings was dark except for the liquor store on the corner. Street lights on Main at the residential cross-streets were dim with mist.

At 10:30, an old car turned

from Main onto Elm and parked at the curbing on the other side of the alley beyond the liquor store parking lot. The driver, a young man by the spring of his step, walked through the shadows of the empty parking lot and entered the liquor store by the front door.

Few cars traversed that section of Main Street that time of night. The two residential

cross streets were clear except for the car parked on Elm and another driving down Sycamore on the dark side of the block, slowing as it approached the mouth of the alley. The closing click of a door at the back of the liquor store sounded, heard by nobody, and a darker shadow entered the alley shadows, seen by nobody, until the headlights of the car turning from Sycamore caught the man in their glare and momentarily halted him in stiff surprise. He ran then, arms hugged at his sides, yanked open the door of the parked car, tossed two bottles to the seat, switched on the ignition and zoomed up Elm.

The creeping headlights watched him run and take off, then they blacked out near the end of the alleyway directly behind the liquor store.

The mist turned to light rain, dispersing the fog, and by eleven o'clock, the two residential streets were dark and empty as was the alley that connected them.

On Main Street, one car made a left and entered the parking lot at the side of the liquor store.

Mr. Bruton hurried out of the car and around it in the rain, sprinted for the front door, pushed it open and discovered his wife, face down, lying in her own blood.

AT FIRST, Tommy Tyler tried to brazen it out by being righteously indignant. "What do you mean I held up a liquor store?"

"That's what we mean," said the cops impassively.

"Find the dough then." Tommy crossed his arms and leaned back on the bunk. "If I held up a liquor store, I got some bread. Okay, then, find it."

"We will," they promised.
"I been right here all the time."

"Sure," said the cops.

"So prove I been somewhere else."

"We will," assured the cops. "We'll prove you were at this liquor store tonight. It's where you got that liquor you're drinking."

"Prove it," said Tommy.

"That's easy," said the cops. One picked up a bottle and looked at the label. "This is an imported Scotch whiskey, and there's only one place in town sells the brand."

"So what does that prove?" asked Tommy.

"It proves you were in Bruton's Liquor Store on the corner of Main and Elm and shot Mrs. Bruton to death."

Tommy Tyler suddenly remembered the two bright headlight eyes that had rounded the corner from Sycamore into the alley and held him captive for

one lost moment in revealing glare.

It was on his parents' back lot that Tommy Tyler had constructed the shack he lived in. Built of tag-ends of lumber and without a working plan, the shack personified Tommy's design for living, without purpose and in solitude.

The police found the money taken from the cash register that Wednesday night without trouble, just as they knew they would. Tommy was not too bright either during the commission of his crimes or on covering his tracks after commitment. The \$353 was readily discovered under one of the many loose floor boards of his shack, the bills folded and placed on the dirt.

The Tylers were nice and ineffectual people, so the police went easy on them. They walked from Tommy's shack on the back of the lot, up to the house in front.

"We're sorry," they said, "but that's the way it is," displaying the money, explaining where the evidence had been found and how their son had been drinking further evidence only two hours after the body of his wife had been found by Mr. Bruton.

"This time," explained the officer reluctantly, "I'm afraid Tommy will have to be tried by the adult court. This time it has to be that way."

Mrs. Tyler cried, "Oh no," and Mr. Tyler nodded sadly, his shoulders sagging.

Tommy Tyler was nineteen and in a spot. So he retreated, defensively uncommunicative on the subject of stealing the money and the Scotch, even of being in the vicinity of the liquor store, sullenly suggesting that both points be proved. As to the killings, however, he was vehemently verbal, proclaiming his innocence loudly.

"I never killed any old lady," he shouted. "I never even had a gun. I never had a gun," being a limp refutation, a kid like that, in trouble since he was old enough to find trouble.

"Okay then, where is it?" Tommy cried; "you gotta find the gun to prove it," which held no water since you certainly did not have to find the weapon to prove a man guilty. Anyway, Tommy was always telling the police to prove it and the police were always proving it.

Before the trial, Mr. Bruton made only one comment, but he made it often and at length. "How would you like to find your wife dead when you came to pick her up?" and paused so his listeners could decide how they would like such a scene. "Shotgun, they say," said Mr. Bruton. "My own kid's got a shotgun, and believe me, I taught him how to shoot it and what to

shoot it at. How would you like to find your kid's mother shot with a shotgun and have to go home and tell your kid his mother was dead?" pausing again to allow his listeners to ponder such a problem.

"This kid of mine's about the same age as that killer. He's a good straight kid. Never had any trouble with him. Straight-A student out at that junior college. Studies at night, doesn't go prowling around robbing and killing people. Imagine having to go home and tell my kid his mother got shot for a few hundred bucks and a couple of bottles of Scotch! It was rough, believe me. I'd rather be hung up by my heels than ever have to go through that again. The kid fell apart. He's sensitive, see? He just fell apart, that's all. His mother and him were like that," at which point, Mr. Bruton held up his middle and forefinger, closely tight.

"The Bruton boy, Myron; never had any dates. Fact. He took his mother to everything. The games at junior college. Plays. Everything. He took his mother," said Mr. Hergesheimer, retired and living on Sycamore Street, drafted now to keep the liquor store open during time of mourning. "Think what this does to Myron!"

Mr. Hergesheimer had many observations to make to the

many customers who never before had patronized this liquor store, but did so now, since it was practically famous. "You see, the father kept the store open every night except on the first Wednesday of each month, when there was a council meeting, and then she did it. That left the mother alone most of the time, so Myron took her places. He just wanted to. You never saw a mother and son so close. It was beautiful, I tell you," and Mr. Hergesheimer shook his head in awe at such beauty.

Mr. Polk, who lived on Elm, and swore he heard the getaway car that night, spent all his free hours in the liquor store listening to Mr. Hergesheimer, and when he could get a word in edgewise, he swore again that he had heard the getaway car, believing it, finally, he had sworn it to be the truth so many times.

"I sure heard that getaway car," said Mr. Polk, "and you know I wasn't surprised when it was the Tyler kid! He's been asking for it for years, out of one scrape and into another. This time, he'll get it good. This time they won't sit him down in juvenile hall and give him a talking to."

"That rotten kid," said Mr. Hergesheimer. "He really ruined the Bruton boy's life."

"They won't rap him on the

wrist with a vacation at that boys' camp, either," said Mr. Polk. "No siree, this time he'll get the works."

THE TYLERS saw their son twice a week in the visiting room of the jail, facing him sadly and helplessly on one side of the separating table while Tommy sat withdrawn on the other. The conversation, twice each week, was uniformly the same, sterile and succinct, the father's offered in droop-shouldered submission, "How are you, son?" to receive a noncommittal okay. "Are they treating you all right?" with the same expressionless reply—the mother's tense and protestive, "You look thin, Tommy," raising her hands against his frozen silence, palms out as if to protect her sagging breasts. "Are you getting enough to eat?" covering herself with the same gesture at Tommy's scornful "sure."

They had hired the best defense counsel they could afford and, as usual, having done for their son all that they could do, they waited, submissively tense, for what would happen next.

The defense counsel, turned off by the kid as people were always turned off, tried harder, hoping to make up by extra effort what he could not offer in understanding.

"Now, Tommy," he said, "tell me all about it."

"What's to tell?" said Tommy.

"How you went to the liquor store that night."

"Prove I did," he said.

"It's already been proved," said the attorney patiently. "The money was found."

"Prove it was from that liquor store," said Tommy, his eyes blank.

"There was the Scotch. The only store in town sells that brand."

"So prove I didn't buy it. From that liquor store. Before." Tommy swung his legs off his cell bunk and sat on the edge of it. "You gotta prove all that before you can even say I killed that old lady, and you can't prove a thing because no one saw me there," said Tommy, staring just beyond the attorney, hopeful that whoever belonged to the headlights that swung into the alley that night didn't know what he was looking at, or couldn't put two and two together or just wanted to stay out of it. Without a witness to place him at the scene of the crime, Tommy reassured himself in frightened despair, nobody could prove anything for sure, and without proof he wouldn't be indicted for murder.

But he was.

Defense counsel, fed to the

eyebrows by this uncooperative client, requested a change of venue, which was rejected. He knew he would be unable to get an unbiased jury, and he knew he had no case, so when it came to court in late winter, the trial was short and the jury verdict immediately unanimous. Tommy Tyler was sentenced to death.

"Oh no," cried Mrs. Tyler and Mr. Tyler's shoulders drooped low.

Mr. Hergesheimer, who still worked part time at the liquor store with Mr. Bruton so tied up with attending the trial and all, was not surprised.

"It's no more than he deserves," he declared, "killing that poor boy's mother."

"Do you know his father says he won't even *talk* about her he's so broken up? Just goes around like a lost soul."

"Too bad," said Mr. Polk, less interested in the bereaved than in the bereaver, "they say he won't be executed. How many are there on death row now? And how long has it been since one of them's been executed? But he should be. The way they mollycoddle killers these days is a crime."

Mr. Bruton added, an addendum to his usual comment. It was, "Well, I say an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, like the Bible, you know. So I can't say I'm not pleased with the

verdict. But it won't bring my boy's mother back to him. He really doted on her, too much maybe. He don't eat, don't sleep. You know where he goes? Out to the cemetery and sits there."

When the Tommy Tyler case was denied an appeal, defense counsel was not surprised and prepared to try again, using once more community bias, rephrased, as cause for retrial, desperately needing something new, and what new evidence could he dredge up? What new angle to offer the State Supreme Court? Nothing, he thought, greatly distressed, not about his client but the Tyler parents, so helpless, so resigned, hopelessly driving one hundred fifty miles to the prison once a month to see their son, the stranger, and listen to his short replies to questions that were only a repetition of those asked in the city and county jails.

"Are you all right?" and "How are they treating you?" "Do you have enough to eat?" with drooped shoulders and protective hands.

To the attorney, the father timorously quoted, "He says they didn't prove anything." The attorney assured Mr. Tyler that it had all been proved; the stolen money which was found, the liquor placing him at the scene of the crime—and as far as the shotgun that had done the

killing, that was circumstantial, becoming evidential when added to the other proofs.

"Well, I don't know," said the father, believing his son had never owned a gun of any kind, but not sure, not sure of anything about Tommy, and dropped his shoulders in resignation.

It was eleven visits and eleven months later that the father again ventured, "He says there wasn't a witness to him being there."

"There didn't have to be a witness," explained the attorney patiently. "The found money and the liquor bottles were the witnesses. You know that."

"Yes, I know that," the father agreed, "but Tommy says that since whoever drove into the alley that night didn't say anything, that made no witnesses, and if there weren't any witnesses, nothing was proved."

"There rarely are witnesses to a major crime," patiently explained the attorney, smiling gently. "So he admitted at last that he was in the alley that night—now *there* is an admission..." and caught himself up. "Who drove into the alley and when?"

The father did not know. All he knew was that his son was sullen and bitter, and occasionally spoke more than a word or two in his bitterness.



"I'll go see him," promised the attorney and the mother said, "Oh no," realizing the futility of seeing her son, and the father drooped his shoulders, convinced that such a trip would be fruitless.

The kid was the same. He turned the attorney off.

"You admitted to your folks you were in that alley," he said.

"Prove it," said Tommy.

"It's been proved," said the attorney. "There was a witness who saw you there."

"Nobody said so."

"You said so. You said there was a car. When did you see the car?"

"You can't prove I saw one. You can't prove I was in that alley."

"The man in the car can," said the attorney.

"He saw me?"

"Look, if he was in the alley and his headlights were on, he saw you. Right?"

"But he doesn't know it was me. He has to prove it was me."

The attorney wanted to throttle the kid.

"You went in the front door. We know that," he said. "The back door was locked. Spring lock. It could only be opened by a key from the outside. So you went in the front and you came out the back. It must have been then, when you came out with the money and the liquor, running down the alley and the car turned in..." the attorney paused to picture a map of the Elm crossing alongside the liquor store, and the Sycamore intersection a block down at the mouth of the alley.

"So it had to be then," said the attorney, "after you'd got in the liquor store, probably with your hand in your pocket, finger pointing, saying, punk-like, 'I got

a gun here, give me your dough,' or 'your bread' or whatever, pointing your finger at that poor scared woman too frozen to reach for the liquor store gun that was lying right there on the shelf under the cash register, loaded and ready, opened the cash register and let you have it, the liquor too, that you reached for just because it was handy..."

"Prove it," said Tommy, and the attorney thought what-the-hell, the-kid-doesn't-even-know-I'm-trying-to-help-him.

"How about someone not wanting to admit he was in that alley and saw you running away from the liquor store? Why would the witness not want to come forward? What has he got to hide?"

"Prove it," said Tommy, knowing only that this attorney was bearing down on a witness and a witness meant they could prove stuff, and if they proved he was there that night, for sure, with someone saying it right out and all, they could prove the money and the liquor—and even the shooting without a gun, then where would he be? And he looked around in desolation at where he already was, in the closet-sized visiting room of the prison death row.

"Now, how about that someone having a key to the spring lock?" said the attorney. "And how about him not wanting to

admit he was in that alley and saw you running away from the liquor store? Why would the witness not want to come forward, unless he had something to hide."

"Prove it," said Tommy, not wanting a witness, any witness, to the fact that he was even there.

"Oh, hell," said the attorney, sick to his guts with this dumb kid and his one-track mind that didn't know a loophole when he saw one, but feeling great sorrow for the parents who'd had to put up with him for almost twenty-one years now.

"Okay," said the attorney, "I'll prove it."

Not knowing how, after a year and a half, he could prove who belonged to a pair of headlights, or even if it was important to know, but with his new and successful request for a retrial, the attorney convinced himself that Tommy was guilty of robbery only, not of murder.

When the Supreme Court ruling was given, and the reversal was splashed all over the county newspaper on the first Wednesday of April, the town council alerted.

The business of the school crossing guards was being discussed when the chairman asked of the council members and the few attending civic-minded spectators if anyone had anything

further to say, and Mr. Bruton jumped up, shouting, "You damn betcha." He unfurled the evening paper to reveal the headline, TOMMY TYLER TO HAVE NEW TRIAL, and the discussion quickly deserted the crossing guards to center, hysterically, on the injustice, the gross stupidity and permissiveness of lawmakers in allowing that bastard killer another day in court.

Mr. Bruton's passion was infectious and everyone in the City Hall council room that night was feverishly eager to stop the wheels of misdirected justice.

"A petition," someone called out, and the suggestion was met with a mob-like acceptance. "Yes, a petition." For the first time, the council stayed in session until long after eleven o'clock, it actually being almost midnight by the time the document was properly worded and plans made for its typing, duplication and distribution.

The Tylers were first confronted by one of the petitions tacked above the vegetable bin of their favorite grocery store. "We, the undersigned, are fully convinced that the Justices of the State Supreme Court did act 'positively wrong' in granting a retrial to Tommy Tyler and we do petition said Court to reverse its ruling," they read. Mrs. Tyler whispered, "Oh no," and raised

quivering hands before her breast. Mr. Tyler's shoulders sagged as they turned from the paper and its many signatures, even running along the sides in the margins.

Importantly busy, Mr. Bruton carried petitions to householders, explaining that he was the husband of the woman this mad dog killed, father of the son who had lost his mother... "I presume you are a mother, Madam, ah yes, I see the bicycle in the driveway, the basketball net on the front of the garage. Mother and son, a beautiful sight," and he described the close relationship of his own son with his mother before they were so ruthlessly torn asunder. "Took his mother everywhere. She was his best girl. His best pal too, he even took her with him up in the hills to shoot rabbits. Yes," Mr. Bruton shook his head sadly. "It was beautiful. When my boy lost his mother, he lost everything. Doesn't care any more. Doesn't go anyplace. Quit school—he even put his shotgun away, probably because she was killed with one..." and Mr. Bruton got another signature.

He obtained on an average of a hundred individual signatures a day, so occupied that he again enlisted Mr. Hergesheimer's help in the liquor store.

"That rotten kid," Mr. Hergesheimer told Mr. Polk, who

dropped in after work, "here he made a mess of the boy by killing his mother and now they're going to give him a new trial. Probably let him go free next time..."

"Probably pat him on the head, give him a new gun and tell him to go out and do it again," suggested Mr. Polk. "Think Bruton's got a chance with that petition of his?"

"I hope so," said Mr. Hergesheimer, and pointed at a copy scotch taped to the counter. "We've filled up three of them right here."

"Bruton's sure working on it, isn't he?"

"Sure is, and he's got the whole town behind him."

Along with a re-hash of the first trial, the newspaper listed a daily count of petitioners objecting to a second. Mr. Bruton, interviewed, stated in print that he would personally carry the petitions to the State Capitol as soon as the number reached 30,000. "And, by God," the newspaper quote him as saying, "we'll see if that bastard gets free to kill another good boy's mother."

The attorney was busy visiting Tommy on death row and getting the same "prove it" answers to every question asked until he was on the verge of executing the prisoner with his own two bare hands to save the

State and petitioners the trouble.

He talked to Mr. and Mrs. Tyler who were resigned to their son's present fate, resigned to a new trial, resigned also to a reversal should the petitioners win. The attorney felt alone as he drove down Main, up Sycamore to the alley and turned, his headlights brightening the alley to Elm. He made this small journey many nights and at different times from ten, having had no help from Tommy as to time, to eleven, the time at which Mr. Bruton had discovered his wife. The alley was always deserted, but had a thief emerged from the back door of the liquor store, the attorney would have seen the shadow of him. He parked once behind the liquor store and tried the door. It was locked.

He would have recognized Mr. Bruton from his constant attendance at the trial more than a year and a half ago, so it was not Mr. Bruton who stood behind the counter that late afternoon the attorney walked in and purchased a few items. He glanced at the petition scotch taped to the counter.

"How is it going?" he asked.

"Good," said Mr. Hergesheimer. "That's the fifth one we've got filled up here."

"Mr. Bruton's working hard on it. Right?"

"Sure he is."



"Wants this kid to get what's coming to him?"

"Why not? Look what he did to his family. The boy, Myron's the boy's name, he's a lost soul since his mother got killed. Took it hard," and Mr. Hergesheimer told the story again as he had told it so often to whoever would listen, pointing out the position of the body, assisted by Mr. Polk, who on his way home to Elm Street, stopped in at the liquor store to add his imaginative recollection of hearing the get-away car that night. "It zoomed," he said, "made an awful racket and I thought then whoever's in that car is running away from something. And, sure enough, he was running away from murder."

Mr. Hergesheimer said, "I'm standing right on the spot where Bruton found his wife. Right here, with the liquor store gun, loaded, laying on the shelf above her head, so that punk of a kid must have walked in right behind his shotgun and froze her in her tracks—"

"Who knows?" said the attorney mildly. "It might have been like that. She also might have frozen at the *threat* of a gun by an unarmed goon. It's possible too that later, when the killer came through the back door—" the attorney glanced that way at a door inset not more than two feet so that

anyone who stepped through could be seen from any position at the counter—"she saw and recognized who had entered, and so did not reach for the gun, not because she was frozen with terror, but because she knew and trusted him and did not realize she needed to defend herself until he brought out the shotgun and killed her dead."

Mr. Hergesheimer looked confused and said, "Huh?" Mr. Polk offered his memory of the get-away car. "Oh, come on," Mr. Hergesheimer said as if he suspected the customer of being one of those liberal softies always crying over criminals and excusing them for their crimes, "you're being real far out. The kid came in the front door, got the money and the liquor, then got trigger-happy and blasted away, and flew out the back door."

"I heard the getaway car," interrupted Mr. Polk.

"How could anyone come in the back door without a key? The only people who had keys to that back door were the Brutons."

"Yes," said the attorney. "Bruton and the son."

"Hey," said Hergesheimer, "you trying to accuse Bruton of killing his wife? Why, he was at the council meeting and the boy was home studying—that's what Mr. Bruton said. He said when he

went home to tell Myron what had happened, there he was, studying."

The attorney laughed easily. "I was only theorizing," he said. "After all, with this new trial coming up, people wonder and suppose things."

"You don't have to wonder about the Brutons," said Mr. Hergesheimer with conviction. "Why, Mr. Bruton! There's no finer man ever lived! Practically worked himself to death in this liquor store to provide for his family. He was here all the time except for those first Wednesdays of the month when he went to council meeting. And the son, well now, Myron was the kind of son any man'd want, studied hard and got good grades. Wonderful to his mother. Took her every place. You wouldn't catch him with a girl. He dated his mother. Fine boy, real fine boy. That's all changed now after she got killed. You wouldn't know him. Dropped out of college. Doesn't do anything because everything he did he did with his mother, Mr. Bruton said. Like playing cards and chess and going places. Even target practice and shooting rabbits—" and a muscle jumped in the attorney's jaw.

"But no more. Not even that. Mr. Bruton told me he found the shotgun in the back of the boy's closet, wrapped up, he said, in

one of his mother's dresses. Now, that's pitiful, the boy grieving that way."

"Isn't it though?" said the attorney thoughtfully.

"Spends a lot of his time out at the cemetery just sitting there by her grave."

"I heard the getaway car just as clear," said Mr. Polk.

The attorney picked up his purchases and turned from the counter.

"How about signing the petition?" asked Mr. Hergesheimer.

The attorney turned back.

"No," he said. "I want a new trial for that boy on death row. I am his attorney."

Mr. Hergesheimer watched him out the door, and then said softly, "Hey, what was he doing?" and Mr. Polk's imaginative memory became so faulty that he wondered if, after all, he wasn't watching television the night of the murder, with the sound turned high as he always watched television, every night.

By the time Mr. Bruton had collected 30,238 signatures and had taken off for the State Capitol, surrounded at the airport by civic-minded well-wishers and tight-lipped crime-busters, counsel for the defense had obtained a court order to search for and examine a shotgun in the Bruton home which, when found, was wrapped in one of

Mrs. Bruton's dresses just as Mr. Hergesheimer had said it would be.

"What else could I do?" asked Myron, once the slugs from the shotgun were discovered to be identical with the slugs in Mrs. Bruton's body, a statement that baffled the police but not the psychiatrists. "She was my mother."

"So this is a whole new ball game," patiently explained the attorney to his client. "You will be charged now with robbery only."

"Prove it," sneered Tommy Tyler.

His parents were confused.

"You mean," ventured Mr. Tyler, "that there will be a new trial even after all those names on all those petitions in all those stores?" His shoulders sagged with the weight of more trouble.

"Oh no," quavered Mrs. Tyler, protecting her breasts.

Mr. Hergesheimer continued to tend the liquor store that was doing a land office business. Mr. Polk still dropped in after work.

"The Bruton boy," said Mr. Hergesheimer, "that Myron. He always seemed so great," and shook his head in bewilderment. "Do you think," he asked, leaning over the counter whose shiny top was slightly marred by the dull and sticky squares left by scotch tape, "Do you think Mr. Bruton knocked himself out with those petitions to keep that poor kid from a retrial simply because he knew, all along, that his son had killed his mother?"

Mr. Polk considered the question, remembering his own hallucinatory recollection, and said, "No. He didn't know. And that was the pity."

In the Next Issue

THIS MAN MUST DIE

A New Dramatic Complete Short Novel

by JACK WEBB

Their friend and benefactor, their old football coach—blown murderously to bits by a business tycoon hell-bent for power and survival. Led by the man in a wheel-chair, the old team closes ranks to run down the killer.



Campus Murder With Tomahawk

Furtive and illicit was his love, sudden and primeval his dying. Who killed the campus lover boy—and why?

by WALDO CARLTON WRIGHT

IT WAS NATURAL for the faculty to suspect Martha Gordon of murdering her husband. Then Dr. Cloute, president of Horseham College, reminded the

troopers that Natty, a half breed Indian maintenance man, was the only one who could have used the tomahawk so effectively.

I was just back from the

boondocks that spring semester, teaching journalism, when the bludgeoned body of Cyril Gordon was found naked in the hemlock woods back of campus.

Horseham College, with ivy draped red brick Old Main, huddled on a knoll, is one of those half forgotten New England colleges where even today the house mothers are more likely to call the president the headmaster and the catalogs still offer Elocution as a liberal arts subject.

Cyril Gordon, tall, lean, with wavy flaxen hair, was teaching Dramatics. He lived with his red headed wife Martha in Wentworth Hall. Everyone could hear them quarreling. That is, her tearing him apart, even at rehearsals. It was pretty plain she was jealous of Eve Hackett, and not without cause.

Eve Hackett had come to Horseham a tight lipped virgin several years ago, directly from Durham, as dean of women. In addition to counseling the farm girls on the naughty ways of the birds and the bees, she taught Speech 101 with appropriate gestures. Dr. Cloute approved of Miss Hackett's distinctly Harvard accent, being a New Hampshire man himself.

Natty Bowles, the half breed, told me he had caught Hackett and Gordon on the black leather couch in his office one night. He

had gone in to Old Main to check the thermostats. But Natty had such a vivid imagination. As it turned out that was only a preliminary interlude to what happened between the young drama instructor and the prim hipped dean of women.

Natty, a cross between a French Canadian mother and an Algonquin chief, became one of my best friends. He had carried my trunk to the third floor of the wooden faculty dorm when I arrived at midterm. From his Indian heritage he had acquired the body of a blacksmith, from his French mother, his peeping Tom character. He could out-work any two farm hands, replace a leaky roof in the morning, dig a trench for a broken pipe that afternoon. And all night every two hours he walked the rounds of campus buildings, against the threat of prowlers, fires, or panty raids of the girls' dorms. He would fall asleep in my office, listening to the radio, but in ten minutes he would be on his rounds.

He was the first one to tip me off as to what went on between the young drama instructor and the dean of women. He had heard them talking together on the stage of the gym. It was after midnight and he had come down to check the furnace. He had slipped back in the vestibule, listened.

"Make love," he said, grinning, exposing a missing front tooth. The tip of his red nose almost slipped into the hole.

"You mustn't go around telling lies like that about people you don't like," I said, recalling that Natty had complained to me a month earlier about Cyril Gordon tearing him out for turning down the heat the evening he had scheduled a rehearsal for the spring play.

Not that it seems too unlikely Miss Hackett was having her first affair. It had to happen sometime, he being a poet. Besides it was all too evident Cyril Gordon had had it up to his bobbing Adam's apple with his marriage to a fading red-headed actress.

Mrs. Gordon had brought with her the wrinkled neck glamor of Broadway. She had understudied Helen Hayes, appeared with the Lunts. Any day you could find her in the snack bar on a stool making up to whatever sweat shirted athlete might slide into the next stool for Ma Pringle's mid-morning hamburgers and coke.

Late afternoons from the office on the raised ramp of the gym, I could hear them. During rehearsal Mrs. Gordon lent her Helen Hayes voice in coaching the play. They were staging Thornton Wilder's "Our Town". Cyril had agreed to be the

narrator, off stage, having been unable to entice any of the farm boys to read the part.

"Stop mouthing those lines like a trained seal," she would call out of the darkness to her husband. "Damn it all, Cyril, put some guts into it."

"Yes, darling," Cyril said. "It's been quite a while since I played this part."

"Well, get with it," she called, motioning to the student players. "Let's go through the graveyard scene again. From the stepladder where the dead girl says 'Mother look at me, just once.'"

As the time came nearer for the pre-Easter performance, Mrs. Gordon continued to chew him out. He seemed to grow meeker, with his quiet, "Yes, darling. Of course, Martha, you know best."

Even the cast took to feeling sorry for him. No one resented his having this affair on the sly with the prim Victorian dean of women.

The night of the performance, with the auditorium crowded, when Cyril was halfway through the narration, speaking the lines with the nasal twang of a Yankee telling the story to his cronies around a pot bellied stove, a voice roared from the wings, "Damn it all, Gordon, put some feeling into it."

The Irish drama coach dropped the sheet to the stage. He switched off the mini light

that had been focused on the page. He turned and vanished into the wings, back stage. Like a fadeout. That was the last any of us saw Cyril Gordon alive.

It almost broke up the play, her swearing at him, his walking off like that. But she hurried up the left aisle, switched on the light and continued to read the narration as if nothing had happened.

The young players were quite upset. Some forgot entire lines. But with awkward pauses they ran through the third act and the curtain dropped with a plop on the stage.

Dr. Cloute came back stage to talk to Mrs. Gordon. She was sitting on the divan, crying: Dr. Cloute sat down beside her, patted her hand.

"You were quite right in correcting his reading," he said. "His enunciation was abominable."

"I just don't know what got into me," Mrs. Gordon said quietly. "By the way, where did the bastard go?"

The Irish poet wasn't anywhere in the gym, nor in the Gordon apartment in the faculty dorm. Only Natty Bowles had seen where he had gone, to the apartment of the dean of women. But no one else knew that at the time. None of the students and surely none of the faculty. Dr. Cloute appeared to

be the most mystified about the disappearance of the drama director.

As an able administrator, Dr. Cloute that same week appointed Mrs. Gordon to carry on her husband's classes. She even agreed to coach one of Miss Hackett's speech classes that was preparing for the spring debate with the team from Dennison.

The former actress proved an able replacement of her husband. She held tryouts for *Macbeth*, arranged for a girl's chorus in the Greek style, wrote the verses to come in at the end of each act, to comment on the cruel murder of the King.

Her target for abuse became the dean of women. Not that she ever went into the dean's office, accused her of adultery, or anything like that. Instead she cut Miss Hackett down, word by word, criticizing her students of speech.

"Who ever taught you to talk like an Edison record?" she would ask the girls. "Gestures like that went out with elocution, years ago. Say the lines naturally, Phyllis. This lady Macbeth is a murdereress, not a dean of women in some smart assed college, like Horseham."

It was Natty who told me that Cyril Gordon was still on campus, hiding out, waiting for an opportunity to settle for her bawling him out, ruining his

career. Natty had seen him twice slipping into Miss Hackett's apartment well after hours. He was carrying a tennis racket, as if this were the weapon with which he planned, when opportunity offered, to do away with his wife.

Dr. Cloute alerted the troopers. Obviously there was a potential killer on the loose around campus, a disgruntled member of the faculty bent on possible murder of his wife. Anything might happen.

"Not a word of this in the papers, Henderson." He had called me into his office where he sat in state, like a ruler in more ways than one.

"But word's bound to leak out, with the troopers nosing around." I knew something would soon slip into the Bedford *Eagle* through one of the campus correspondents.

"That's what I hired you for, public relations, Henderson." He pressed the tips of his fingers together to show how all things can be contained. "Horseham's image must be maintained, especially with the riots and violence on most campuses."

The troopers searched every nook for the missing Cyril Gordon. Even the dark room in the science building where Natty claimed to have seen the lovers go one evening last fall. The drama instructor had vanished.



Then one afternoon in May, bloodhounds were brought in to track the missing Irishman. They smelled a pair of Gordon's trousers, then set off along a tan bark path that led into the hemlock woods. There on an

open knoll, under alder bushes, they came on the decomposed body of the former drama director. The poet's head had been bashed in by a flint tomahawk that lay by his naked, fly-blown body. A red swastika had been smeared on his chest.

Naturally at first everyone suspected Mrs. Gordon had followed her husband and the dean of women up the tan bark path, interrupted their party and cracked in his skull. Probably he had been murdered shortly after she had interrupted his reading the part of the narrator in "Our Town."

Of the members of the faculty the troopers questioned, the most upset emotionally was Miss Hackett.

"There was never anything between us but friendship," she kept repeating in her Victorian way. "He would often come to me for consolation. I felt genuinely sorry for him, the way she browbeat him. But for anyone to infer anything more is too preposterous for words."

Mrs. Gordon went to pieces in the morgue when the troopers took her there to complete the identification of her husband.

"Poor dumb bastard," she said. "I loved him."

It was the Indian tomahawk shifted suspicion to Natty Bowles. Yes, he had seen the drama director several times after

the night of the performance, dodging around campus after midnight. Yes, that was his axe. He had given it to Dr. Cloute to add to his Indian collection. Yes, he had watched the lovers on the knoll many evenings, starting last fall. And then back stage that winter, when he came in to check the furnace.

Dr. Cloute admitted that Natty had given him the tomahawk to add to his collection of artifacts. He was proud of his collection. He would show it to his students during his lectures on the French and Indian wars. He had written several papers on this bit of Colonial history, saying, "Somehow, I feel far enough back one of my ancestors was a chief of the Six Nations."

Oddly enough, Dr. Cloute hadn't missed the tomahawk until it was found by the body of Cyril Gordon. It had evidently been taken from the white pine chest in his study where he kept arrow heads, stone pestles, hide scrapers, bone fish hooks and round net sinkers, peace beads of wampum, charred cobs of Indian corn.

In his lectures to the senior class he always stressed the cultural status of the American Indians. They were nearer civilization than the early Colonials realized. They knew how to preserve meat. They had cross

pollinated corn, beans, squash. And they were a highly moral people. There was no trading of maidens under the hide tepees or in the long bark houses. At that, he would smile knowingly and his senior students would smile back. They knew this was his way of condemning what went on back campus, even among some of the Horseham faculty.

Suspicion centered like the nose of the bloodhounds on Natty Bowles. He told too many conflicting stories about what he had seen, how he had watched the lovers make love back stage and on the grassy knoll. But when the prosecuting attorney held up the tomahawk for the jury to see the dried blood on the blade, he shook his head, denied he had used it to knock out the brains of Cyril Gordon, director of dramatics. As much as he admitted hating him.

Yes, he had seen the red paint on the bloated body when the troopers moved it into the morgue, holding their noses. Yes, the body bore the Indian curse sign, the sign a brave painted on the chest of his dead enemy.

Had Natty ever quarreled with the drama director? Yes, the white man had sworn at him on three different occasions for forgetting to leave the thermostat turned up in the gym winter evenings Gordon was holding rehearsals. Gordon had called

him a bad name, a lazy clout. At first Natty had thought the drama director had meant the president, Dr. Cloute. At the time Natty had asked me what it meant and I had told him clout meant a blow.

"So instead you deliberately set out to kill him, didn't you?" The attorney repeated the charge to remind the jury. "You sneaked up on him while he was asleep on the knoll, struck him with your tomahawk. Then with red clay you painted on the dead man's chest the swastika of death."

The jury brought in a verdict of murder in the first degree. Natty was shipped to the death house. But after the prison psychiatrist's examination, Judge Trent had Natty committed to the hospital for the criminal insane.

Campus settled down after that. Came the time for finals, new contracts for the faculty. Dr. Cloute's wife Hilda forced him not to renew Miss Hackett's contract. Hilda had taken Martha Gordon into her confidence. Mrs. Gordon could handle the speech classes much better than the dean of women.

The last day of school, Miss Hackett opened the little blue envelope. Instead of her contract for the next year, she found a neatly typed letter informing her that Bruce Harrison would

become dean of both male and female students.

She had heard the day before through the campus grapevine, that because of my friendship with Natty, Dr. Cloute had not renewed my contract, under the contrived excuse that journalism would not be offered next year at Horseham College. She came to my office to see me.

"Before I leave, I just wanted to tell you how much I appreciate your keeping my affair with Mr. Gordon out of the papers," she said, sitting down by my desk and lighting a cigarette.

"That was nothing, just good public relations, as Dr. Cloute would put it."

"He gave you the sack too, didn't he?" she asked. Except for her wide blue eyes and one strand of crow black hair that had a way of dropping down over one eye and that she kept tossing aside like an untamed mare, she looked much like my youngest aunt Matilda, the one who lives in Boston.

"I don't know what to do about it," she said. "Maybe you could advise me."

"About what?"

"Dr. Cloute." She tossed her head. "He's quite a bastard, you know!"

I shook my head. She seemed like Natty, accusing the president of Horseham College.

"The first year I came to Horseham as dean of women, he asked me to teach a two-hour course in speech. As a favor, Miss Hackett," he said, and five hundred dollars more a year."

"Horseham doesn't pay very well," I admitted to encourage her to continue the story of her relations with Dr. Cloute.

"I soon enough found out what the extra salary meant," she spoke quietly, as if confessing to a priest. "He would call me into his office after the last bell. At first he would talk about his family in New Hampshire and ask me if I had ever met any other Cloutes while I was at Durham. That led to his confessing that he was part Indian. And then he asked me if I didn't want him to show me how the Indians made love."

"And did he show you?"

"Yes, after he threatened to tell the faculty how he had seen me going into the darkroom with one of my senior boys, to help him develop some pictures of my speech class."

"So Dr. Cloute was your first lover." I knew she wanted me to level with her.

"Yes, we got along all right. The second year he put through another thousand dollar raise. And then Cyril Gordon came on campus. From that first faculty meeting, I loved this blue-eyed Irishman, the free way he

walked, swinging his legs, whistling, his tousled hair bobbing with his laughter. I had dreamed of a lover like him, gentle as summer rain, coming on me sitting in the heather, waiting for his voice."

"And he found too what he was looking for?"

I must encourage her to be quite frank.

"You and everyone else on campus knows he did. His wife had interrupted his career, torturing him, before his class, at rehearsals. He told me she was driving him daft."

"Yes, it was quite evident." I had heard the red-headed actress many times tearing away his dignity as a man.

"If you were I, would you tell the police?" Her quick question caught me wondering how it had been, this Irishman lying with her in his arms, on the divan back stage, on the pineneedled knoll in the back woods.

"Tell the police what?" I asked, wondering what she meant. She put out her cigarette in the ash tray, watching the sparks flare and die.

"About Dr. Cloute and how he took to following us, spying on us. Once on the divan a small flashlight flicked on in the wings and I saw his face twisted with his own frustration. My next salary check was fifty dollars short. When I asked why he said

the board of trustees had ordered him to cut all salaries fifteen percent and his hands were tied. I learned later the only two salaries that had been cut were Gordon's and mine."

"You expected that, didn't you?"

"Yes, it proved he was planning to do away with us. I told Gordon we must be more circumspect, stop seeing each other. But he just laughed, said Cloute was a yellow-bellied bully, frantic with jealousy, but harmless as crazy old Natty. Cyril should have known better. And then that horrid last day."

She stopped and taking a kerchief from her bag, wedged it against her lips. Her shoulders shook but she didn't cry, returned the wadded kerchief to her beaded bag.

"So you were on the knoll with Gordon when he was murdered?"

"Yes, I was sitting with my back against the trunk of a giant hemlock, smoking. Gordon was reading Browning. He had just come to the lines about Fra Pandolf pointing to the oil painting of the Last Dutchess in the Florentine gallery. Through a clump of alder I saw the red-rimmed eyes of an Indian. His face was painted with blotches of white and yellow and one hand grasped the hilt of a tomahawk. I screamed much as

the Dutchess must have cried out when she saw her husband, the Duke, standing at the foot of the bed."

"Did your screams scare him away?"

"No, he hooted, sprang from the alders and swung the tomahawk at Cyril. Before my poet could throw up his arms to protect himself, the Indian sunk the stone blade into his skull."

"Did you blank out at that?" I asked.

"No, I was so frozen with fear I stopped screaming. As if I weren't there he stooped over his victim and with a stick daubed a swastika sign on the dead man's chest."

"He didn't strike you?" I asked her.

"No, he turned so I could see the grimace on his face, a mask of hate, lips drawn back, narrowed eyes, distended nostrils. With a grunt he tossed the stone axe at the dead body, swung and vanished in the underbrush."

"You mean, the Indian was Natty?"

She shook her head. "It was Dr. Cloute, made up like an Indian."

"How did you recognize him?"

"When he sneered, drew back his lips in that look of hate. Natty was missing a front tooth.

Dr. Cloute's dentures were always perfect."

She opened her bag, took out a calling card, scribbled an address on the back, handed it to me.

"I'm going home to New Hampshire for a while." She rose, threw the strap of her bag over one shoulder. In her blue tailored suit, she looked like a smart Wave.

"You mean you're not going to the police?"

She turned to look out the window of the gyn, across campus, toward Old Main perched high among the hemlocks. She then looked at me.

"No, I'm leaving him to live with his crime. Remember the lines, 'There is a Fate that shapes our lives. Rough hew them how we may.'"

She turned to the door and for the first time I saw how clear and blue her eyes were.

Sitting alone in my stuffy office, I wondered where I would get another job. Then I remembered Natty in Farview, better housed, fed and watched over than he had ever been on campus, I went along with Miss Hackett's decision. Leave the murderer to sweat it out. It was a warped, illegal decision. But as many crazy twists of poetic justice, probably it was the most just.

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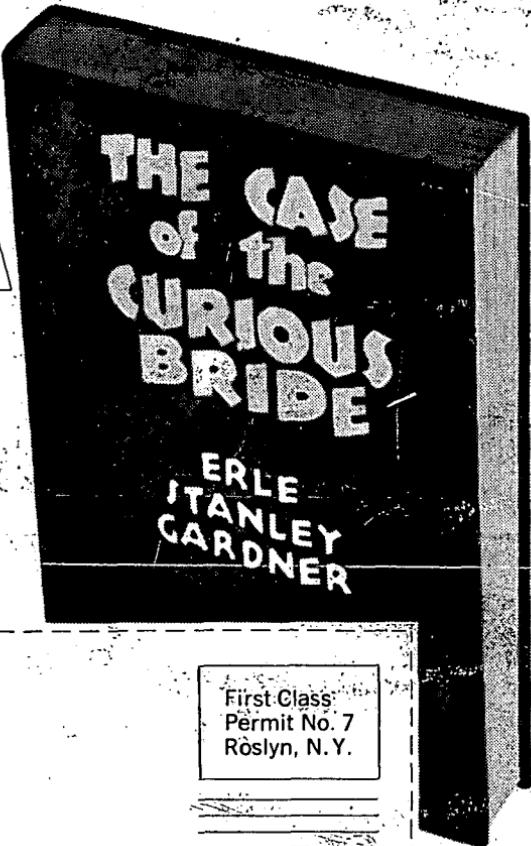
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